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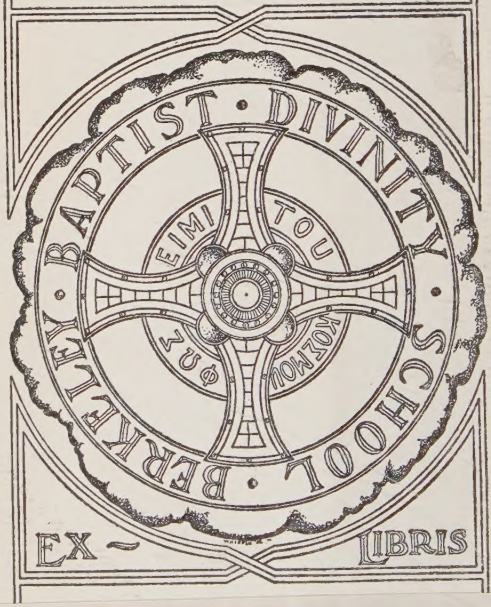

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SERMONS BY
REV. C. H. SPURGEON

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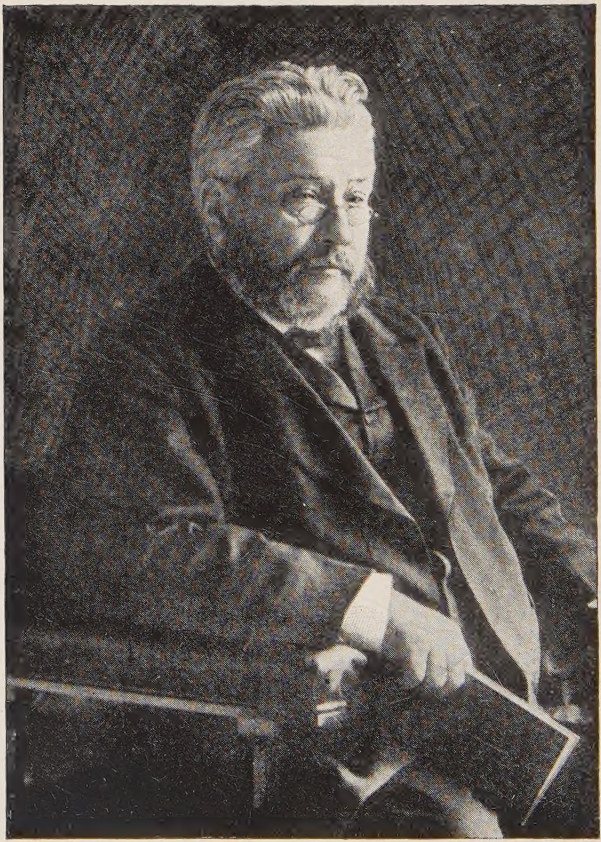


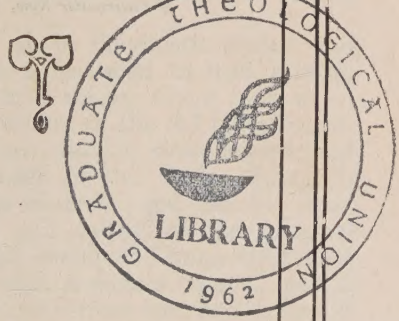
CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON.
(*Photo by Elliott and Fry.*)

SERMONS

BY

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON

EDITED BY
SIR W. ROBERTSON NICOLL,
LL.D.



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INTRODUCTION.

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON was born at Kelvedon, Essex, on June 19, 1834, and died at Mentone on January 31, 1892. Though but fifty-eight when he died, he had preached for forty years to immense audiences. In this respect his ministry is perhaps unparalleled in the whole history of the Christian Church. His sermons were printed from the beginning, and read all the world over. They are still being printed, and still read. Whatever judgment may be formed of his theology, he stands out a peerless instance of the efficacy of preaching.

Spurgeon was brought up in Calvinistic circles, and from his early years was accustomed to read Puritan books. At Newmarket, in a school where he was an usher, he discovered his teacher in the old housekeeper. She was a staunch Calvinist, logical, clear-headed, and with a wonderful knowledge of the Bible. Spurgeon said later: "Many a time we have gone over the covenant of grace together, and talked of the personal election of the saints, their union to Christ, their final perseverance, and what vital godliness meant; and I do believe that I learned more from her than I should have learned from any six doctors of divinity of the sort we have nowadays." He preached his first sermon in a cottage at Teversham, near Cambridge, when a boy of sixteen, dressed in a jacket and turn-down collar. Even then he showed his oratorical power, and the unchanging bent of his convictions. One who was present remembers that he used the sentence: "I *know* that I

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was chosen of God in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world." He was from 1852 to 1854 pastor of the Baptist congregation at Waterbeach, in Cambridgeshire, where his preaching transformed the place. Before he was quite twenty he was preaching to the Baptist congregation in New Park Street, Southwark. In a very short time the place was crammed, and a new building was made necessary. While it was being erected he preached in Exeter Hall, which was also insufficient to contain his audience. A great tabernacle was projected, and meanwhile Spurgeon preached at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, where his congregations numbered ten thousand. In Mrs. Oliphant's *Life of Principal Tulloch* there is an account of the impression which young Spurgeon produced on Tulloch and on his companion, Professor Ferrier, the metaphysician, both very keen and critical judges :—

"We have just been to hear Spurgeon, and have been both so much impressed that I wish to give you my impressions while they are fresh. As we came out we both confessed, 'There is no doubt about *that*,' and I was struck with Ferrier's remarkable expression, 'I feel it would do me good to hear the like of that ; it sat so close to reality.' The sermon is about the most real thing I have come in contact with for a long time. Guthrie is as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal to it ; and although there is not the elevated thought and descriptive felicity of Caird (the latter especially, however, not wanting), there is more power. Power in fact and life are its characteristics, and I could not help being pleased that I had hit upon the man pretty well in the notice of him along with Robertson and Guthrie, which was never published. The place is fully adapted for preaching, being the largest, lightest, and airiest building I ever saw. It was crammed, of course, but not in the least uncomfortable, as round all the thickly studded benches there was a wide and open corridor, with windows open, out and in of which you could walk into the gardens (Surrey gardens) as you liked ;

and Ferrier kept taking a turn now and then during the sermon. He began the service with a short prayer, then sang the 23rd Psalm, but instead of our fine old version, some vile version, in which the simple beauty of the hymn is entirely lost. Then he read and expounded the thirty-second chapter (I think) of Numbers. His remarks were very good, and to the point, with no display or misplaced emotion. He then prayed more at length, and this was the part of the service I least liked. He preached from the same chapter he read, about the spies from the land of Canaan—the good and bad spies.....In fact, the whole was a wonderful display of mental vigour and Christian sense, and gave me a great idea of what good such a man may do. The impression made upon Ferrier, which he has just read over to me as he has written it to his wife, is 'driving downright.' He improves in look too, a little, as he warms in preaching. At first he certainly is not interesting in face or figure—very fat and podgy; but there is no doubt of the fellow, look as he may. His voice is of rare felicity, as clear as a bell—not a syllable lost."

In 1861 the Metropolitan Tabernacle in Newington Causeway, where Spurgeon ministered until his death, was opened. From the first it was attended by vast crowds. No fewer than seven thousand persons constituted the ordinary congregation. They were drawn from all parts of London, and indeed from all parts of the world. A church of more than five thousand members was gathered, an orphanage, and a theological college were built, and all the institutions were maintained with full and growing efficiency till the great preacher's death. There is no doubt that his life was shortened by the tremendous weight of his labours and responsibilities. There have been few men whose death moved so profoundly all sections of the British people.

Spurgeon was a man of rigid and uncompromising orthodoxy. He believed in the inerrancy of Scripture, and in verbal inspiration. He was a strong Calvinist, but his Calvinism was of the same type as Newman's

in his early days. "While I considered myself predestined to salvation, I thought others simply passed over, not predestined to eternal death. I only thought of the mercy to myself." To him the propitiatory element in Christianity was the primary element. Setting over against the fact of sin, the fact of Christ and him crucified, he held the atonement consummated on Calvary to be the one supreme event of history and the one hope of the race. From the beginning to the end of his ministry his great object was the conversion of the masses. He was a preacher to the people, and he believed that the prophet who fails to teach the poor and ignorant has clearly come in his own name, and not in the name of the Father. To Spurgeon, Christianity was above all else a converting force for the mass and for the individual. The chief characteristic of his sermons is their intense zeal for souls.

Spurgeon's physical endowment for preaching was very unusual. He had the inestimable gift of a voice as clear as a silver bell, and as winning as a woman's. It filled without the slightest effort the largest building in which he preached. It had an extraordinary clarity, sweetness, and modulation. He was also a master of style. On this point may be quoted the obituary notice in the *Church Times*: "A greater mistake cannot be made than that which thinks or speaks of Mr. Spurgeon as an uneducated man. He was the master of an English style which many a scholar might envy, and which was admirably fitted for his purposes. This style could only have been acquired by great pains, and by the constant study of the best literary models which it recalls." Mr. Spurgeon had a great wealth of illustrations, of pithy anecdotes, and of carefully restrained but real humour. His chief source of power, however, was that he spoke from the heart. A great and trained theologian, master in every part of his own system, he preached nothing that he had not proved. Deeply read in the literature of Christian experience, he was not content with that. He himself had gone through the

agonies and the triumphs which he preached. There was reality, sincerity, and definiteness in all he said. The last man on earth to pretend to what he did not possess, he was even too reticent as to his wide reading and exact study of many subjects. There were those who were specially drawn to him for the mystic element which pervaded all he wrote. He is one of the very few English preachers who have been at once very popular and at the same time imbued with the very spirit of the mystics.

There were hundreds of thousands who believed that they owed to him their own souls. What was said of Newman may with certain modifications be applied to him. It was he who had opened to them visions of the unseen ; it was he who sometimes half lifted the very veil of the other country. It was he who made heaven and heavenly ministers something more than objects of faith. It was he who invested all the facts of the Christian redemption with new and entrancing certainty. It was he who made life for his disciples a more august thing in contact with him, and made them capable of higher efforts and nobler sacrifices. But even those who stood further away knew as if it were by instinct that Mr. Spurgeon was a man of the stuff of which saints are made. They knew that whoever else might sink into self-seeking or fall down before the golden image of the world, that would he never. They knew that religion was always the prevailing and mastering idea of his life. He was one of those elect few to whom religious cares and interests are what secular cares and interests are to most men. He was self-controlled, observant, and wise, and he had a homely shrewdness and humour which were very refreshing. Mr. Spurgeon played his part well in the practical world, but his life was not there. The growth of the kingdom of grace was his prosperity ; the opening of a new vein of spiritual life was his wealth. The one road to his friendship was a certain likemindedness. This spirituality is so rare in men of great powers that it is invariably the way to

influence. It inspires a kind of awe. Men bow before it, feel themselves in the presence of the eternal world, think wistfully of their own state, and are touched for a moment at least by a certain sense of wonder and regret.

I have tried to make a fairly representative selection from his sermons. Their publication began in 1855, and goes on to the present day. Roughly, the volumes may be divided into three classes. There are those which represent the period of his extreme youth. Then there is the period of his greatest power, running perhaps up to the year 1876. The glow is unabated; the force, the grip, the strenuousness of appeal he himself never rivalled. Then come the later sermons. They are more full, perhaps, than their predecessors of mellow wisdom, of the wisdom of a deeply exercised spirit, and they are perhaps more touched with a growing gloom. For Spurgeon in his later years believed that he saw around him and before him a decay of faith.

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SERMONS BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD.

"I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."—MALACHI iii. 6.

IT has been said by some one that "the proper study of mankind is man." I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, "Behold I am wise." But when we come to this master-science, finding that our plumb-line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought, that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass's colt; and with the solemn

Delivered on Sunday morning, January 7, 1855, at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

exclamation, "I am but of yesterday, and know nothing." No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God. We shall be obliged to feel

> "Great God, how infinite art thou,
> What worthless worms are we!"

But while the subject *humbles* the mind it also *expands* it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. He may be a naturalist, boasting of his ability to dissect a beetle, anatomize a fly, or arrange insects and animals in classes with well nigh unutterable names; he may be a geologist, able to discourse of the megatherium and the plesiosaurus, and all kinds of extinct animals; he may imagine that his science, whatever it is, ennobles and enlarges his mind. I dare say it does, but after all, the most excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ, and him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity. And, whilst humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently *consolatory*. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrows? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of grief and sorrow; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead. It is to that subject that I invite you this morning. We shall present you with one view of it —that is *the immutability of the glorious Jehovah*. "I am," says my text, "Jehovah" (for so it should be

translated) "I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

There are three things this morning. First of all, *an unchanging God;* secondly, *the persons who derive benefit from this glorious attribute,* "the sons of Jacob;" and thirdly, *the benefit they so derive,* they "are not consumed." We address ourselves to these points.

I. First of all, we have set before us the doctrine of THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD. "I am God, I change not." Here I shall attempt to expound, or rather to enlarge the thought, and then afterwards to bring a few arguments to prove its truth.

1. I shall offer some exposition of my text, by first saying, that God is Jehovah, and he changes not *in his essence.* We cannot tell you what Godhead is. We do not know what substance that is which we call God. It is an existence, it is a being; but what that is, we know not. However, whatever it is, we call it his essence, and that essence never changes. The substance of mortal things is ever changing. The mountains with their snow-white crowns, doff their old diadems in summer, in rivers trickling down their sides, while the storm cloud gives them another coronation; the ocean, with its mighty floods, loses its water when the sunbeams kiss the waves, and snatch them in mists to heaven; even the sun himself requires fresh fuel from the hand of the Infinite Almighty, to replenish his ever-burning furnace. All creatures change. Man, especially as to his body, is always undergoing revolution. Very probably there is not a single particle in my body which was in it a few years ago. This frame has been worn away by activity, its atoms have been removed by friction, fresh particles of matter have in the meantime constantly accrued to my body, and so it has been replenished; but its substance is altered. The fabric of which this world is made is ever passing away; like a stream of water, drops are running away and others are following after, keeping the river still full, but always changing in its elements. But God is perpetually the same. He is not composed

of any substance or material, but is spirit—pure, essential, and ethereal spirit—and therefore he is immutable. He remains everlastingly the same. There are no furrows on his eternal brow. No age hath palsied him; no years have marked him with the mementoes of their flight; he sees ages pass, but with him it is ever *now*. He is the great I AM—the Great Unchangeable. Mark you, his essence did not undergo a change when it became united with the manhood. When Christ in past years did gird himself with mortal clay, the essence of his divinity was not changed; flesh did not become God, nor did God become flesh by a real actual change of nature; the two were united in hypostatical union, but the Godhead was still the same. It was the same when he was a babe in the manger, as it was when he stretched the curtains of heaven; it was the same God that hung upon the cross, and whose blood flowed down in a purple river, the self-same God that holds the world upon his everlasting shoulders, and bears in his hands the keys of death and hell. He never has been changed in his essence, not even by his incarnation; he remains everlastingly, eternally, the one unchanging God, the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither the shadow of a change.

2. He changes not *in his attributes*. Whatever the attributes of God were of old, that they are now; and of each of them we may sing "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen." Was he *powerful*? Was he the mighty God when he spake the world out of the womb of non-existence? Was he the Omnipotent when he piled the mountains and scooped out the hollow places for the rolling deep? Yes, he was powerful then, and his arm is unpalsied now; he is the same giant in his might; the sap of his nourishment is undried, and the strength of his soul stands the same for ever. Was he wise when he constituted this mighty globe, when he laid the foundations of the universe? Had he *wisdom* when he planned the way of our salvation, and when from all eternity he marked out

his awful plans? Yes, and he is wise now; he is not less skilful, he has not less knowledge; his eye which seeth all things is undimmed; his ear which heareth all the cries, sighs, sobs, and groans of his people, is not rendered heavy by the years which he hath heard their prayers. He is unchanged in his wisdom; he knows as much now as ever, neither more nor less; he has the same consummate skill, and the same infinite forecastings. He is unchanged, blessed be his name, in his *justice*. Just and holy was he in the past; just and holy is he now. He is unchanged in his *truth*; he has promised, and he brings it to pass; he hath said it, and it shall be done. He varies not in the *goodness*, and generosity and benevolence of his nature. He is not become an Almighty tyrant, whereas he was once an Almighty Father; but his strong love stands like a granite rock, unmoved by the hurricanes of our iniquity. And blessed be his dear name, he is unchanged in his *love*. When he first wrote the covenant, how full his heart was with affection to his people. He knew that his Son must die to ratify the articles of that agreement. He knew right well that he must rend his best beloved from his bowels, and send him down to earth to bleed and die. He did not hesitate to sign that mighty covenant; nor did he shun its fulfilment. He loves as much now as he did then; and when suns shall cease to shine, and moons to show their feeble light, he still shall love on for ever and for ever. Take any one attribute of God, and I will write *semper idem* on it (always the same). Take any one thing you can say of God now, and it may be said not only in the dark past, but in the bright future it shall always remain the same: "I am Jehovah, I change not."

3. Then again, God changes not in his *plans*. That man began to build, but was not able to finish, and therefore he changed his plan, as every wise man would do in such a case; he built upon a smaller foundation and commenced again. But has it ever been said that God began to build but was not able to finish? Nay. When he hath boundless stores at his command, and when his

own right hand would create worlds as numerous as drops of morning dew, shall he ever stay because he has not power? and reverse, or alter, or disarrange, his plan, because he cannot carry it out? "But," say some, "perhaps God never had a plan." Do you think God is more foolish than yourself then, sir? Do you go to work without a plan? "No," say you, "I have always a scheme." So has God. Every man has his plan, and God has a plan too. God is a master-mind; he arranged everything in his gigantic intellect long before he did it; and once having settled it, mark you, he never alters it. "This shall be done," saith he, and the iron hand of destiny marks it down, and it is brought to pass. "This is my purpose," and it stands, nor can earth or hell alter it. "This is my decree," saith he, promulgate it, angels; rend it down from the gate of heaven, ye devils; but ye cannot alter the decree; it shall be done. God altereth not his plans; why should he? He is Almighty, and therefore can perform his pleasure. Why should he? He is the All-wise, and therefore cannot have planned wrongly. Why should he? He is the everlasting God, and therefore cannot die before his plan is accomplished. Why should he change? Ye worthless atoms of existence, ephemera of the day! ye creeping insects upon this bay-leaf of existence! ye may change *your* plans, but he shall never, never change *his*. Then has he told me that his plan is to save me? If so, I am safe.

> "My name from the palms of his hands
> Eternity will not erase;
> Impress'd on his heart it remains,
> In marks of indelible grace."

4. Yet again, God is unchanging in his *promises*. Ah! we love to speak about the sweet promises of God; but if we could ever suppose that one of them could be changed, we would not talk anything more about them. If I thought that the notes of the bank of England could not be cashed next week, I should decline to take them;

and if I thought that God's promises would never be fulfilled—if I thought that God would see it right to alter some word in his promises—farewell Scriptures! I want immutable things: and I find that I have immutable promises when I turn to the Bible: for, "by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie," he hath signed, confirmed, and sealed every promise of his. The gospel is not "yea and nay," it is not promising to-day, and denying to-morrow; but the gospel is "yea, yea," to the glory of God. Believer! there was a delightful promise which you had yesterday; and this morning when you turned to the Bible the promise was not sweet. Do you know why? Do you think the promise had changed? Ah, no! *You* changed; that is where the matter lies. You had been eating some of the grapes of Sodom, and your mouth was thereby put out of taste, and you could not detect the sweetness. But there was the same honey there, depend upon it, the same preciousness. "Oh!" says one child of God, "I had built my house firmly once upon some stable promises; there came a wind, and I said, O Lord, I am cast down and I shall be lost." Oh! the promises were not cast down; the foundations were not removed; it was your little "wood, hay, stubble," hut, that you had been building. It was that which fell down. *You* have been shaken *on* the rock, not the rock *under* you. But let me tell you what is the best way of living in the world. I have heard that a gentleman said to a negro, "I can't think how it is you are always so happy in the Lord, and I am often downcast." "Why, Massa," said he, "I throw myself flat down on the promise—there I lie; you stand on your promise—you have a little to do with it, and down you go when the wind comes, and then you cry, 'Oh! I am down;' whereas I go flat on the promise at once, and that is why I fear no fall." Then let us always say, "Lord, there is the promise; it is thy business to fulfil it." Down I go on the promise flat! no standing up for me. That is where you should go—prostrate on the promise; and remember, every

promise is a rock, an unchanging thing. Therefore, at his feet cast yourself, and rest there for ever.

5. But now comes one jarring note to spoil the theme. To some of you God is unchanging in his *threatenings*. If every promise stands fast, and every oath of the covenant is fulfilled, hark thee, sinner!—mark the word—hear the death-knell of thy carnal hopes; see the funeral of thy fleshly trustings. Every threatening of God, as well as every promise shall be fulfilled. Talk of decrees! I will tell you of a decree: "He that believeth not shall be damned." That is a decree, and a statute that can never change. Be as good as you please, be as moral as you can, be as honest as you will, walk as uprightly as you may,—there stands the unchangeable threatening: "He that believeth not shall be damned." What sayest thou to that, moralist? Oh, thou wishest thou couldst alter it, and say, "He that does not live a holy life shall be damned." That will be true; but it does not say so. It says, "He that believeth not." Here is the stone of stumbling, and the rock of offence; but you cannot alter it. You must believe or be damned, saith the Bible; and mark, that threat of God is as unchangeable as God himself. And when a thousand years of hell's torments shall have passed away, you shall look on high, and see written in burning letters of fire, "He that believeth not *shall* be damned." "But, Lord, I *am* damned." Nevertheless it says "*shall be*" still. And when a million ages have rolled away, and you are exhausted by your pains and agonies, you shall turn up your eye and still read "SHALL BE DAMNED," unchanged, unaltered. And when you shall have thought that eternity must have spun out its last thread—that every particle of that which we call eternity, must have run out, you shall still see it written up there, "SHALL BE DAMNED." O terrific thought! How dare I utter it? But I must. Ye must be warned, sirs, "lest ye also come into this place of torment." Ye must be told rough things; for if God's gospel is not a rough thing, the law is a rough thing; Mount Sinai is a rough thing.

Woe unto the watchman that warns not the ungodly! God is unchanging in his threatenings. Beware, O sinner, for "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

6. We must just hint at one thought before we pass away, and that is—God is unchanging in the *objects of his love*—not only in his love, but in the *objects* of it.

> "If ever it should come to pass,
> That sheep of Christ might fall away,
> My fickle, feeble soul, alas,
> Would fall a thousand times a day."

If one dear saint of God had perished, so might all; if one of the covenant ones be lost, so may all be, and then there is no gospel promise true; but the Bible is a lie, and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance. I will be an infidel at once, when I can believe that a saint of God can ever fall finally. If God hath loved me once, then he will love me for ever.

> "Did Jesus once upon me shine,
> Then Jesus is for ever mine."

The objects of everlasting love never change. Those whom God hath called, he will justify; whom he has justified, he will sanctify; and whom he sanctifies, he will glorify.

I. Having thus taken a great deal too much time, perhaps, in simply expanding the thought of an unchanging God, I will now try to prove that *he is* unchangeable. I am not much of an argumentative preacher, but one argument that I will mention is this: *the very existence, and being of a God, seem to me to imply immutability*. Let me think a moment. There is a God; this God rules and governs all things; this God fashioned the world; he upholds and maintains it. What kind of being must he be? It does strike me that you cannot think of a changeable God. I conceive that the thought is so repugnant to common sense, that if you for one moment think of a changing God, the words

seem to clash, and you are obliged to say, "Then he must be a kind of man," and get a Mormonite idea of God. I imagine it is impossible to conceive of a changing God; it is so to me. Others may be capable of such an idea, but I could not entertain it. I could no more think of a changing God, than I could of a round square, or any other absurdity. The thing seems so contrary, that I am obliged, when once I say God, to include the idea of an unchanging being.

2. Well, I think that one argument will be enough, but another good argument may be found in the fact of *God's perfection*. I believe God to be a perfect being. Now, if he is a perfect being, he cannot change. Do you not see this? Suppose I am perfect to-day, if it were possible for me to change, should I be perfect to-morrow after the alteration? If I changed, I must either change from a good state to a better—and then if I could get better, I could not be perfect *now*—or else from a better state to a worse—and if I were worse, I should not be perfect *then*. If I am perfect, I cannot be altered without being imperfect. If I am perfect to-day, I must keep the same to-morrow if I am to be perfect then. So, if God is perfect, he must be the same; for change would imply imperfection now, or imperfection then.

3. Again, there is the fact of *God's infinity*, which puts change out of the question. God is an infinite being. What do you mean by that? There is no man who can tell you what he means by an infinite being. But there cannot be two infinities. If one thing is infinite, there is no room for anything else: for infinite means all. It means not bounded, not finite, having no end. Well, there cannot be two infinities. If God is infinite to-day, and then should change and be infinite to-morrow, there would be two infinities. But that cannot be. Suppose he is infinite and then changes, he must become finite, and could not be God; either he is finite to-day and finite to-morrow, or infinite to-day and finite to-morrow, or finite to-day and infinite to-morrow—all

of which suppositions are equally absurd. The fact of his being an infinite being at once quashes the thought of his being a changeable being. Infinity has written on its very brow the word "immutability."

4. But then, dear friends, let us look at *the past:* and there we shall gather some proofs of God's immutable nature. "Hath he spoken, and hath he not done it? Hath he sworn, and hath it not come to pass?" Can it not be said of Jehovah, "He hath done all his will, and he hath accomplished all his purpose?" Turn ye to Philistia; ask where she is. God said, "Howl, Ashdod, and ye gates of Gaza, for ye shall fall;" and where are they? Where is Edom? Ask Petra and its ruined walls. Will they not echo back the truth that God hath said, "Edom shall be a prey, and shall be destroyed?" Where is Babel, and where Nineveh? Where Moab and where Ammon? Where are the nations God hath said he would destroy? Hath he not uprooted them and cast out the remembrance of them from the earth? And hath God cast off his people? Hath he once been unmindful of his promise? Hath he once broken his oath and covenant, or once departed from his plan? Ah! no. Point to one instance in history where God has changed! Ye cannot, sirs; for throughout all history there stands the fact, that God has been immutable in his purposes. Methinks I hear some one say, "I can remember one passage in Scripture where God changed!" And so did I think once. The case I mean, is that of the death of Hezekiah. Isaiah came in and said, "Hezekiah, you must die, your disease is incurable, set your house in order." He turned his face to the wall and began to pray; and before Isaiah was in the outer court, he was told to go back and say, "Thou shalt live fifteen years more." You may think that proves that God changes; but really I cannot see in it the slightest proof in the world. How do you know that God did not know that? Oh! but God did know it; he knew that Hezekiah would live. Then he did not change, for if he knew that, how could he change? That is what I want to

know. But do you know one little thing ?—that Hezekiah's son Manasseh, was not born at that time, and that had Hezekiah died, there would have been no Manasseh, and no Josiah, and no Christ, because Christ came from that very line. You will find that Manasseh was twelve years old when his father died ; so that he must have been born three years after this. And do you not believe that God decreed the birth of Manasseh, and foreknew it ? Certainly. Then he decreed that Isaiah should go and tell Hezekiah that his disease was incurable, and then say also in the same breath, " But I will cure it, and thou shalt live." He said that to stir up Hezekiah to prayer. He spoke, in the first place as a man. " According to all human probability your disease is incurable, and you must die." Then he waited till Hezekiah prayed ; then came a little " but " at the end of the sentence. Isaiah had not finished the sentence. He said, " You must put your house in order for there is no human cure ; but " (and then he walked out. Hezekiah prayed a little, and then he came in again, and said) " *But* I will heal thee." Where is there any contradiction there, except in the brain of those who fight against the Lord, and wish to make him a changeable being.

II. Now secondly, let me say a word on THE PERSONS TO WHOM THIS UNCHANGEABLE GOD IS A BENEFIT. " I am God, I change not ; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Now, who are " the sons of Jacob," who can rejoice in an immutable God ?

1. First, they are the *sons of God's election ;* for it is written, " Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated, the children being not yet born, neither having done good nor evil." It was written, " The elder shall serve the younger." " The sons of Jacob "

> " Are the sons of God's election,
> Who through sovereign grace believe ;
> By eternal destination
> Grace and glory they receive."

God's elect are here meant by " the sons of Jacob,"—

those whom he foreknew and fore-ordained to everlasting salvation.

2. By "the sons of Jacob" are meant, in the second place, *persons who enjoy peculiar rights and titles.* Jacob, you know, had no rights by birth; but he soon acquired them. He changed a mess of pottage with his brother Esau, and thus gained the birthright. I do not justify the means; but he did also obtain the blessing, and so acquired peculiar rights. By "the sons of Jacob" here, are meant persons who have peculiar rights and titles. Unto them that believe, he hath given the right and power to become sons of God. They have an interest in the blood of Christ; they have a right to "enter in through the gates into the city;" they have a title to eternal honours; they have a promise to everlasting glory; they have a right to call themselves sons of God. Oh! there are peculiar rights and privileges belonging to the "sons of Jacob."

3. But, then next, these "sons of Jacob" were *men of peculiar manifestations.* Jacob had had peculiar manifestations from his God, and thus he was highly honoured. Once at night-time he lay down and slept; he had the hedges for his curtains, the sky for his canopy, a stone for his pillow, and the earth for his bed. Oh! then he had a peculiar manifestation. There was a ladder, and he saw the angels of God ascending and descending. He thus had a manifestation of Christ Jesus, as the ladder which reaches from earth to heaven, up and down which angels came to bring us mercies. Then what a manifestation there was at Mahanaim, when the angels of God met him; and again at Peniel, when he wrestled with God, and saw him face to face. Those were peculiar manifestations; and this passage refers to those who, like Jacob, have had peculiar manifestations.

Now, then, how many of you have had personal manifestations? "Oh!" you say "that is enthusiasm; that is fanaticism." Well, it is a blessed enthusiasm, too, for the sons of Jacob have had peculiar manifestations. They have talked with God as a man talketh with his

friend; they have whispered in the ear of Jehovah; Christ hath been with them to sup with them, and they with Christ; and the Holy Spirit hath shone into their souls with such a mighty radiance, that they could not doubt about special manifestations. The "sons of Jacob" are the men, who enjoy these manifestations.

4. Then again, they are *men of peculiar trials*. Ah! poor Jacob! I should not choose Jacob's lot if I had not the prospect of Jacob's blessing; for a hard lot his was. He had to run away from his father's house to Laban's; and then that surly old Laban cheated him all the years he was there—cheated him of his wife, cheated him in his wages, cheated him in his flocks, and cheated him all through the story. By-and-bye he had to run away from Laban, who pursued him and overtook him. Next came Esau with four hundred men to cut him up root and branch. Then there was a season of prayer, and afterwards he wrestled, and had to go all his life with his thigh out of joint. But a little further on, Rachel, his dear beloved, died. Then his daughter Dinah is led astray, and the sons murder the Shechemites. Anon there is dear Joseph sold into Egypt, and a famine comes. Then Reuben goes up to his couch and pollutes it; Judah commits incest with his own daughter-in-law; and all his sons become a plague to him. At last Benjamin is taken away, and the old man, almost broken-hearted, cries, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away." Never was man more tried than Jacob all through the one sin of cheating his brother. All through his life God chastised him. But I believe there are many who can sympathize with dear old Jacob. They have had to pass through trials very much like his. Well, cross-bearers! God says, "I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Poor tried souls! ye are not consumed because of the unchanging nature of your God. Now do not get fretting, and say, with the self-conceit of misery, "I am the man who hath seen affliction." Why "the Man of Sorrows" was afflicted more than you; Jesus was indeed

a mourner. You only see the skirts of the garments of affliction. You never have trials like his. You do not understand what troubles mean ; you have hardly sipped the cup of trouble ; you have only had a drop or two, but Jesus drunk the dregs. Fear not, saith God, "I am the Lord, I change not ; therefore ye sons of Jacob," men of peculiar trials, "are not consumed."

5. Then one more thought about who are the "sons of Jacob," for I should like you to find out whether you are "sons of Jacob," yourselves. They are *men of peculiar character ;* for though there were some things about Jacob's character which we cannot commend, there are one or two things which God commends. There was Jacob's faith, by which Jacob had his name written amongst the mighty worthies who obtained not the promises on earth, but shall obtain them in heaven. Are you men of faith, beloved ? Do you know what it is to walk by faith, to live by faith, to get your temporary food by faith, to live on spiritual manna—all by faith ? Is faith the rule of your life ? if so, you are the "sons of Jacob."

Then Jacob was a man of prayer—a man who wrestled, and groaned, and prayed. There is a man up yonder who never prayed this morning, before coming up to the house of God. Ah ! you poor heathen, don't you pray ? No ! he says, "I never thought of such a thing ; for years I have not prayed." Well, I hope you may before you die. Live and die without prayer, and you will pray long enough when you get to hell. There is a woman : she did not pray this morning ; she was so busy sending her children to the Sunday-school, she had no time to pray. No time to pray ? Had you time to dress ? There is a time for every purpose under heaven, and if you had purposed to pray, you would have prayed. Sons of God cannot live without prayer. They are wrestling Jacobs. They are men in whom the Holy Ghost so works, that they can no more live without prayer than I can live without breathing. They must pray. Sirs, mark you, if you are living without prayer,

you are living without Christ; and dying like that, your portion will be in the lake which burneth with fire. God redeem you, God rescue you from such a lot! But you who are "the sons of Jacob," take comfort, for God is immutable.

III. Thirdly, I can say only a word about the other point—THE BENEFIT WHICH THESE "SONS OF JACOB" RECEIVE FROM AN UNCHANGING GOD. "Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." "Consumed?" How? how can man be consumed? Why, there are two ways. We might have been consumed in hell. If God had been a changing God, the "sons of Jacob" here this morning, might have been consumed in hell; but for God's unchanging love I should have been a faggot in the fire. But there is a way of being consumed in this world; there is such a thing as being condemned before you die—"condemned already;" there is such a thing as being alive, and yet being absolutely dead. We might have been left to our own devices; and then where should we have been now? Revelling with the drunkard, blaspheming Almighty God. Oh? had he left you, dearly beloved, had be been a changing God, ye had been amongst the filthiest of the filthy, and the vilest of the vile. Cannot you remember in your life, seasons similar to those I have felt? I have gone right to the edge of sin; some strong temptation has taken hold of both my arms, so that I could not wrestle with it. I have been pushed along, dragged as by an awful satanic power to the very edge of some horrid precipice. I have looked down, down, down, and seen my portion; I quivered on the brink of ruin. I have been horrified, as, with my hair upright, I have thought of the sin I was about to commit, the horrible pit into which I was about to fall. A strong arm hath saved me. I have started back and cried, O God! could I have gone so near sin, and yet come back again? Could I have walked right up to the furnace and not fallen down, like Nebuchadnezzar's strong men, devoured by the very heat? Oh! is it possible I should be here this morning, when I think of

the sins I have committed, and the crimes which have crossed my wicked imagination? Yes, I am here, unconsumed, because the Lord changes not. Oh! if he had changed, we should have been consumed in a dozen ways; if the Lord had changed, you and I should have been consumed by ourselves; for after all, Mr. Self is the worst enemy a Christian has. We should have proved suicides to our own souls; we should have mixed the cup of poison for our own spirits, if the Lord had not been an unchanging God, and dashed the cup out of our hands when we were about to drink it. Then we should have been consumed by God himself if he had not been a changeless God. We call God a Father; but there is not a father in this world who would not have killed all his children long ago, so provoked would he have been with them, if he had been half as much troubled as God has been with his family. He has the most troublesome family in the whole world—unbelieving, ungrateful, disobedient, forgetful, rebellious, wandering, murmuring, and stiffnecked. Well it is that he is longsuffering, or else he would have taken not only the rod, but the sword to some of us long ago. But there was nothing in us to love at first, so there cannot be less now. John Newton used to tell a whimsical story, and laugh at it too, of a good woman who said, in order to prove the doctrine of Election. "Ah! sir, the Lord must have loved me before I was born, or else he would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards." I am sure it is true in my case, and true in respect to most of God's people; for there is little to love in them after they are born, that if he had not loved them before then, he would have seen no reason to choose them after; but since he loved them without works, he loves them without works still; since their good works did not win his affection, bad works cannot sever that affection; since their righteousness did not bind his love to them, so their wickedness cannot snap the golden links. He loved them out of pure sovereign grace, and he will love them still. But we should have been consumed by the devil, and by our

enemies—consumed by the world, consumed by our sins, by our trials, and in a hundred other ways, if God had ever changed.

Well, now, time fails us, and I can say but little. I have only just cursorily touched on the text. I now hand it to you. May the Lord help you "sons of Jacob" to take home this portion of meat; digest it well, and feed upon it. May the Holy Ghost sweetly apply the glorious things that are written! And may you have "a feast of fat things, of wines on the lees well refined!" Remember God is the same, whatever is removed. Your friends may be disaffected, your ministers may be taken away, every thing may change; but God does not. Your brethren may change and cast out your name as vile: but God will love you still. Let your station in life change, and your property be gone; let your whole life be shaken, and you become weak and sickly; let everything flee away—there is one place where change cannot put his finger; there is one name on which mutability can never be written; there is one heart which never can alter; that heart is God's—that name Love.

"Trust him, he will ne'er deceive you.
Though you hardly of him deem;
He will never, never leave you,
Nor will let you quite leave him."

THE SPIES.

"And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature." —NUMBERS xiii. 32.

"And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes. And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land." —NUMBERS xiv. 6, 7.

THE unbelief of the children of Israel, prompted them to send spies into Canaan. God had told them that it was a good land, and he had promised to drive out their enemies; they ought therefore to have marched forward with all confidence to possess the promised heritage. Instead of this, they send twelve princes to spy out the land, and "alas, for human nature," ten of these were faithless, and only two true to the Lord. Read over the narrative, and mark the ill effect of the lying message, and the holy boldness of the true spies.

Now I must take up my parable. The land of Canaan is a picture of religion; I do not think it was ever intended to be a picture of heaven, for there are no Canaanites in heaven; certainly in heaven there are no sons of Anak, no giants to be driven out, no walled cities, and no kings with chariots of iron. Canaan is, however, a very excellent picture of religion. The children of Israel must stand this morning as the representatives of the great mass of mankind. The great mass of mankind never try for themselves what religion is; they neither search our sacred books, nor taste and

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try our religion. But this is what they do; they consider those who make a profession of religion as spies who have entered the land, and they look upon our character and our conduct as the message which we bring back to them. The ungodly man does not read his Bible in order to discover whether the religion of Christ is holy and beautiful; no, he reads the living Bible—Christ's church—and if the church is inconsistent he condemns the Bible, though the Bible is never to be accountable for the sins of those who profess to believe it. Ungodly men of course do not come and by repentance and faith make a trial of the love of Christ; they do not enter into covenant with the Lord Jesus, or else they would soon discover that it is a good land that floweth with milk and honey; but instead thereof they stand still, and they say, "Let be, let us see what these Christians make of it. Do *they* find it to be a happy thing? Does it succour *them* in their hour of trouble? Does it comfort *them* in the midst of their trials?" And if they find that our report is a gloomy or an unholy one, they turn aside, and they say, "It is not a good land; we will not enter into it, for its difficulties are great, but its enjoyments are few."

Beloved brethren and friends, to put the parable as simply as I can, I am about to make out every Christian man and woman here to be a spy who has entered into the good land of religion, and who by his conduct and conversation brings either an evil or a good report of this good land, and either moves the world to murmur at and to despise religion, or else inspires it with a holy dread of goodness, and something of a longing after a portion therein.

But I shall begin with a word of caution. In the first place I shall notice that *the men of the world are not to be excused for their folly in trusting to mere report from other persons.* Then, secondly, I shall endeavour to describe *the evil reporters*, the evil spies, which are in the camp; then we will mention some *good spies*, who bring a good report of the land; and, in conclusion, bring a *few*

weighty reasons to bear upon Christian men, why they should act like Caleb and Joshua, and bring up a good report of the land.

I. In the first place, then, THE UNGODLY WORLD ARE NOT TO BE EXCUSED for that, which must nevertheless be admitted to be a very natural matter, namely, that INSTEAD OF INVESTIGATING RELIGION FOR THEMSELVES, THEY USUALLY TRUST TO THE REPRESENTATION OF OTHERS.

The worldly man looks at a Christian to see whether his religion be *joyful.* "By this," says he, "shall I know whether there is that in religion which will make a man glad. If I see the professor of it with a joyous countenance, then I will believe it to be a good thing." But hark, sir! hast thou any right to put it to that test? Is not God to be counted true, even before we have proved him? And hath he not declared himself, "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile"? Doth not the Scripture itself declare that godliness is profitable, not only for this life, but for that which is to come—that it hath the blessing of two worlds, the blessing of this world below the sky and of that upper world above the stars? Would you not know from Scripture if you were to take the Bible and read it, that everywhere the Christian is commanded to rejoice, because it is comely for him? "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart." "Rejoice evermore." "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, rejoice." Remember you have no right to put the joyfulness of religion to any test short of your own experience, for you are bound to believe God on his naked word. It is not for you to stand still till you can see it to be true. It is your duty to believe your Maker when he declares that the ways of religion are pleasantness and all her paths are peace.

Again, you say you will test the *holiness* of Christ's religion by the holiness of Christ's people. You have no right, I reply, to put the question to any such test as that. The proper test that you ought to use is to try it

yourselves—to "taste and see that the Lord is good." By tasting and seeing you will prove his goodness, and by the same process you must prove the holiness of his gospel. Your business is to seek Christ crucified for yourselves, not to take the representation of another man concerning the power of grace to subdue corruption and to sanctify the heart. Your business is yourselves to enter into its valleys and pluck its grapes; yourselves to climb its hills and see its inhabitants. Inasmuch as God has given you a Bible, he intended you to read it, and not to be content with reading *men*. There is his Holy Spirit; you are not to be content with feelings that rise through the conversation of others; your only power to know true religion is, by having that Spirit operating upon your own heart, that you may yourself know what is the power of religion. You have no right to judge religion from anything extra or external from itself. And if you despise it before you have tried it yourself, you must stand confessed in this world as a fool, and in the next world as a criminal. And yet this is so with most men. If you hear a man rail at the Bible, you can usually conclude that he never reads it. And you may be quite certain if you hear a man speak against religion, that he never knew what religion was. True religion, when once it takes possession of the heart, never allows a man to quarrel with it. That man will call Christ his best friend who knows Christ at all. We have found many who have despised the enjoyments of this world, but we never found one who turned from religion with disgust or with satiety, after having once enjoyed it. No, remember my hearers, if you take your religion from other people, and are led by the example of professors to discard religion, you are nevertheless guilty of your own blood. For God has not left you to the uncertain chart of men's characters; he has given you his own Word; a more sure word and testimony, whereunto you do well if ye take heed.

It will be in vain for you to say at the day of judgment, "Such and such a man was inconsistent, therefore

I despised religion." Your excuse will then be discovered to be idle, for you shall have to confess, that in other respects, you did not take another man's opinion. In business, in the cares of this life, you were independent enough; in your political opinions you did not pin your faith to any man's coat; and, therefore, it shall be said of you at last, you had enough independence of mind to steer your own course, even against the example of others, in business, in politics, and such like things; you certainly had enough of mental vigour, if you had chosen to have done so, to have stood out against the inconsistency of professors, and to have searched for yourselves. If all Christ's church were inconsistent, so long as there is a Bible upon earth, you could have no excuse in the day of judgment; for Christ was not inconsistent, and you are not asked to follow Christ's followers—you are asked to follow Christ himself. Until then you can find a flaw in *his* character, a mistake in *his* conduct, you have no right to fling the inconsistency of his followers in the teeth of Christ, nor to turn from him because his disciples forsake him and flee. To their own Master they stand or fall; they must bear their own burden, and you must bear yours too. "Every man shall bear his own burden," saith Scripture, "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account for the things which we have done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil." You will not be accountable for another man's sins, but for your own; and if another man by his sin has brought reproach upon Christ, still it shall be no excuse for you if you do not follow him wholly, in the midst of an evil generation.

II. With that, by way of caveat and guard, I shall now bring forth THE BAD SPIES. I wish that the men mentioned in the text, had been the only spies who have brought an evil report: it would have been a great mercy if the plague that killed them, had killed all the rest of the same sort; but alas! the breed, I am afraid, will never be extinct, and as long as the world endureth,

there will be some professors who bring up an evil report of the land.

But now let me bring forth the evil spies. Remember, these spies are to be judged, not by what they say, but by *what they do;* for to a worldling, words are nothing —*acts* are everything. The reports that we bring of our religion are not the reports of the pulpit, not the reports that we utter with our lips, but the report of our daily life, speaking in our own houses, and the every day business of life.

Well, first, I produce a man who brings up an evil report of the land, and you will see at once that he does so, for *he is of a dull and heavy spirit.* If he preaches, he takes this text—"Through much tribulation we must inherit the kingdom." Somehow or other, he never mentions God's people, without calling them God's *tried* children. As for joy in the Lord, he looks upon it with suspicion. "Lord, what a wretched land is this!" is the very height of poetry to him. He could sing that always. He is always in the valley, where the mists are hovering: he never climbs the mountain's brow, to stand above the tempests of this life. He was gloomy before he made a profession of religion—since then he has become more gloomy still. See him at home. Ask the children what they think of their father's religion; they think they could wish their father was anything except religious. "Father will not let us laugh," they say; "he pulls the blinds down on the Sunday; he tries to make us as dark and miserable as he can on the Sabbath day; he thinks it his duty as a strict Sabbatarian to make the Sabbath the greatest day of bondage out of the whole seven." Ask his wife what she thinks of religion: she says, "I do not know much about it myself, but I wish my husband were a little more cheerful." "Nay, but is it his religion that makes him miserable?" "I do not know what it is," she says, "but I know when he is most miserable, he is generally most religious." Hear him pray: when he is on his knees he gives a long list of his trials and troubles; but he never says at the

end, "More are they that are for us than all they that are against us." He usually dwells upon the valley of Baca, and about crying so much that he makes it a well. He never goes on to say, "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." No, it is just the black part of the story. If you want to see this brother in perfection, you must see him when he is talking to a young convert. The young man is full of joy and gladness, for he has found the Saviour, and, like a young fledgling that has just taken wing, he delights to fly about in the sunshine, and chirp merrily in the joy of his faith. "Ah!" says the old Christian, "the black ox has not trodden on your toes yet; you will have more troubles than you dream of." Old Mr. Timorous was a friend of mine: did you ever hear what he said to Christian, when he met him on his journey? I will tell you the same. "The lions! the lions! the lions!" he cries; he never says "The lions are chained." "The giants! the giants! the giants!" he exclaims. He never saith, "He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young." He takes always the dreary side of the question, bringing up an ill report of the land. And, do you know, some of these people are so proud of their ill report, that they form themselves into a little knot, and they cannot hear any preacher except his face be of an extreme length, and except he has studied the dictionary to find all the most lugubrious terms, and except he appear unto men to fast, just like the Pharisees of old. Now, I do not hesitate to say that these men are evil spies. Far be it from us to mask the great fact that religion does entail tribulation, and that a Christian, like everybody else, must expect in this world to have trouble, for man is born to it as the sparks fly upward; but it is as false as God is true, that religion makes men miserable. So sure as God is good, his religion is good; and as God is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works, religion is an atmosphere in which those tender mercies play,

and the sea in which his lovingkindness swims. Oh, come, ye dreary professors, take away those storm-clouds, and wreathe a few rainbows on your brow. Come, now, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast; take those harps from the willows; down with them, and now try if your unaccustomed fingers cannot make them alive with melody. And if you will not do it, and cannot do it, permit me to bear my testimony. I can say, concerning Christ's religion, if I had to die like a dog, and had no hope whatever of immortality, if I wanted to lead a happy life, let me serve my God with all my heart; let me be a follower of Jesus, and walk in his footsteps; for never was there a truer word spoken than that of Solomon, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." It is a land that floweth with milk and honey; there are clusters even on earth too heavy for one man to carry; there are fruits that have been found so rich that even angel lips have never been sweetened with more luscious wine; there are joys to be had here so fair that even cates ambrosial and the nectared wine of Paradise can scarce excel the sweets of satisfaction that are to be found in the earthly banquets of the Lord.

Perhaps, however, this poor man that I have just sent off is to be pitied. Not so the next one, for he is a rascal indeed. See him! he comes forward as Mr. Meekface, making a great profession of religion. How he mouths the hymns! When he stands up to pray, with what a spiritual kind of voice he prays. Nothing carnal about his voice! He is among the Christian people a great leader. He can preach sermons by the yard. He can dissect doctrines by the hour. There is not a metaphysical point in all our theology that he does not understand,

> "He can a hair divide,
> Betwixt the west and north-west side."

His understanding is, in his own opinion, infinite; and

he makes very boastful pretensions to piety. Everybody says when they see him in his good frames in chapel or elsewhere, "What a dear good man he is!" You follow him to business. He will not swear, but he will lie. He won't out-and-out rob, but he will cheat. He will not curse a man to his face, but he will do worse—he will speak ill of him behind his back. You watch him! He, if he could find a drunkard in the street, would upbraid him, and talk to him so proudly against the sin of intoxication, but he himself very seldom knows his own way upstairs to bed; only that is in a quiet way, therefore nobody sees it, and he is thought to be a very reputable member of society. Don't you know any such people? I hope you do not; but I have met with them. There is a great stock of them still living; men that make grand professions, and their lives are as much opposed to their professions, as hell is opposed to heaven. Now what does the world say of religion when they see these people? They say at once, "Well, if this be religion, we had better have none of it." Says the business man, "I could not do what So-and-so does; it is true I could not sing out of his hymn book, but I could not keep his cash book." We have known many men say, "I could not make so long a prayer as So-and-so, and could not make out my invoices in the dishonest way he does." We have met with worldly men who are far more honest as tradesmen and professional men than persons who make a profession of religion. And we have known on the other hand, men who have made the greatest profession, indulging in all kinds of evil. Horrible shall be that man's fate, who thus ruins other men's souls by bringing up a bad report of the land. But, oh! I beseech you, my hearers, if any of you have seen such professors, let the righteous stand out to-day, like Joshua and Caleb of old; let the Church stand before you and rend its garments, while it entreats you not to believe the lying and slanderous reports of such men. For, indeed, religion is holy; as Christ is holy, even so do his people desire to be holy. And the

grace of God which bringeth salvation is pure and peaceful, it produces in men things that are holy and of good report, things that magnify God, and that make human nature appear glorious. But scarcely do I need to tell you that, in your own circle while you have met with hypocrites, you have met with men whom you could not doubt. Yes, you have sometimes seen even in your evil company, a man who was like an angel; you have felt as Satan did when Abdiel, the faithful among the faithless, stood forth, and would not turn a rebel to his God.

"Abashed the devil stood, and felt how awful goodness was."

I beseech you therefore, do not believe the ill report of the hypocrite, and the unholy man.

But there is a third class of professors who bring up a bad report of the land. And this I am afraid will affect us all; in some measure we must all plead guilty to it. The Christian man, although he endeavours uniformly to walk according to the law of Christ, finds still another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and consequently there are times when his witness is not consistent. Sometimes this witness is, "The Gospel is holy" for he is holy himself. But, alas with the very best of men, there are times when our witness contradicts our faith. When you see an angry Christian—and such a thing may be seen—and when you meet with a Christian who is proud, and such a thing has been known, when you catch a Christian overtaken in a fault, as you may sometimes do, then his testimony is not consistent. He contradicts then what he has at other times declared by his acts.

And here, I say again, I fear that all of us must plead guilty. We have sometimes by our actions put in words which seem to conflict with the general testimony of our lives. Oh! brothers and sisters, do not believe all that you see in us; and if sometimes you see a Christian man betrayed into a hasty or a wrong expression, d

not set it down to our religion, set it down to our poor fallen humanity. If sometimes you should catch us overtaken by a fault, and we trust it shall be rarely enough you so see us, abuse *us*, but do not abuse our Master: say what you will concerning *us*, but do not, we beseech you, impute it to our religion, for saints are sinners still, and the most holy men have still to say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." But we do beseech you, when the madness of sin deludes us, do not believe the maunderings of our madness, but have regard to the general testimony of our lives, and that, we trust, you will find to be consistent with the gospel of Christ. *I* could bear to be abused, but I should not like to have the Master abused. I would rather have it believed that I was not a Christian at all, than allow any one to say that any faults I have were caused by my religion. No, Christ is holy; the gospel is pure and spotless. If at any time we seem to contradict that witness, do not believe us, I beseech you, but look into the matter for yourselves, for indeed it is a good land, a land which floweth with milk and honey.

III. Thus I have brought forth the evil spies who bring up a bad report; and now, thank God, we have some GOOD SPIES too. But we will let them speak. Come Joshua and Caleb, we want your testimony; though you are dead and gone, you have left children behind you; and they, still grieved as you were at the evil report, rend their clothes, but they boldly stand to it that the land they have passed through is an exceeding good land.

One of the best spies I have ever met with is an *aged Christian.* I remember to have heard him stand up and tell what he thought of religion. He was a blind old man, who for twenty years had not seen the light of the sun. His grey locks hung from his brow, and floated over his shoulders. He stood up at the table of the Lord, and thus addressed us:—"Brethren and sisters, I shall soon be taken from you; in a few more months I

shall gather up my feet upon my bed, and sleep with my fathers. I have not the tongue of the learned, nor the mind of the eloquent, but I desire before I go, to bear one public testimony to my God. Fifty and six years have I served him, and I have never found him once unfaithful. I can say 'Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and not one good thing hath failed of all the Lord God has promised.'" And there stood that old man, tottering into his tomb, deprived of the light of heaven naturally, and yet having the light of heaven in a better sense shining into his soul; and though he could not look upon us, yet did he turn himself, and seemed to say, "Young people, trust God in early life, for I have not to regret that I sought him too soon. I have only to mourn that so many of my years ran to waste." There is nothing that more tends to strengthen the faith of the young believer than to hear the veteran Christian, covered with scars from the battle, testifying that the service of his Master is a happy service, and that if he could have served any other master he would not have done so, for his service was pleasant and his wages everlasting joy.

Take the testimony of the *sufferer*. "Behold that fragile form of delicate transparent beauty, whose light-blue eye and hectic cheek are lit by the bale-fires of decline, all droopingly she lieth, as a dew-laden lily, her flaxen tresses, rashly luxuriant, dank with unhealthy moisture." I have seen her when her eyes were sunk, when she could scarce be lifted out of the bed, when the frame was wearied of life; and I have seen her quite complacent, as she took her Bible from beneath her pillow and read, "Yea, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies." I have sat down and spoken to her, and have said to her, "Well, you have been in this sad place these many months. Do you find religion

cheers you now?" "Oh, Sir," she has said, "what could I do without it? I cannot leave this bed; but it has been to me a couch of joy, where Christ has spread a banquet. He has made my bed in all my sickness; he has put his left hand under my head, and his right hand has embraced me; he has given me joy in my sorrows, and has prepared me to face death with a calm and unflinching countenance." Such a case bears witness to the Master. Like that of the grey-headed saint, it is an excellent report of this good land.

But we need not look to sick beds and to grey heads for the only witness. We know a Christian merchant; he is immersed in the cares of this life, and yet he always finds time to prepare for a world that is to come. He has as much business as any man in the city, and yet family prayer is never neglected. And perhaps you find him serving the office of civic magistrate—as was the case in one instance—and yet even on the day of banquet, he rises from his chair, in order that family worship may still be kept up in his house. He is known in business as one who is willing to help little tradesmen. He likes good securities, as other people do; but he will sometimes run a risk to help a rising man. When you go to him, you find him a sharp man of business, he is not to be taken in; but at the same time you will find him a man that will not take you in. You may trust him. Whatever the transaction may be, you have no need to look over the invoice if he has had anything to do with it. There will be no mistake there; or if there be a mistake, it will be palpably a mistake, and immediately confessed with the greatest possible sorrow, for he is upright in his dealings. There has come sometimes in his case an unhappy crisis, and when houses were tumbling, and bankrupts were as common as leaves upon the trees, he was not disturbed and distracted like other men, for his confidence was in his God, and his trust in the God of Jacob. He had some anxiety, but he had more faith; and when his prosperity returned to him, he dedicated part of his substance unto

the Lord, not in a noisy way, so that it might appear in a report that So-and-so gave a hundred a year to a society, but he gave five hundred, and nobody knew of it. Men said of him in the Exchange and in the Market, "If there is a Christian, it is that man." When they saw him, they said, "There is something in religion. We have watched him; we have never found him trip or turn aside. We have always found him the same upright character, fearing his God, and fearing no man." Such a man brings up a good report of the land. I may talk here Sunday after Sunday, and every day in the week elsewhere, but I cannot preach in so forcible a way as you can, who by your actions are preaching to the world. Ah! and I cannot preach so well as those who are servants, who by their holy action in the midst of trial and difficulty have an opportunity to show what grace can do in the heart. Those are good spies who bring up a good report of the land.

And, my sisters, let me say a word to you. It is possible for you, too, to bring up a good report; not by neglecting your households in order to attend to visiting societies. Let visiting societies be attended to. God be thanked for them, for they are among the best institutions of our times. But I have known some people who would have been a great deal better employed in scrubbing their dressers, and seeing their servants wash up the tea things, than going out visiting the sick from house to house; for their house has run to riot, and their families have been quite out of order, because the wife, like a foolish woman, was plucking everything down at home, while trying to do good abroad. We have known many true sisters of mercy, who are really blessed among women, and God shall bless them abundantly. We have known others who very seldom go out visiting the sick, but they are at home ordering their household. We have known an ungodly husband converted by a godly wife. I remember to have heard an instance of a man who had a wife of so excellent a disposition, that though he was a worldly,

gay man, he used to boast in his gay company that he had got the best wife on earth. Said he, "You cannot put her into a passion. I go home late at night, in all sorts of trim, but she always receives me meekly, and I feel ashamed of myself every time I see her, for her holiness rebukes me. You may put her to any test you like, you will find her the best of women." "Well," said they, "let us all go to supper with you to-night." They did. In they rushed. She did not hint there was nothing in the house, though there was very little; but she and her maid set to with all their might, although it was past twelve o'clock, and very soon had supper, and she waited on them with all the grace of a duchess, seeming as glad to see them as if they were her friends, and had come at the most opportune time. And they began to tell how it was they had come, and asked her how it was she could bear it so patiently. She said, "God has given me a husband; I was not converted before I was married; but ever since I was converted, my first endeavour has been to bring my husband to know Jesus; and I am sure," said she, "he will never be brought to do so except by kindness." Her husband, through these words, after the company had gone, confessed how wrong he had acted to her; his heart was touched; next Sabbath he went to the house of God with her, and they became a happy couple, rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ with all their hearts. She was a good spy, and brought a good report of the land. I doubt not there are many women whose names will never be heard of on earth who will receive the Master's commendation at last, "She hath done what she could;" and when you have done what you can for Christ, by holy, patient, quiet meekness, you are good spies; you have brought a good report of the land.

And you servants, you can do the same. A religious servant girl ought to be the best servant anywhere. A religious shoeblack ought to black shoes better than anybody else. If there be a religious man who is set to clean knives, he ought to take care that he does

not take the edge off. You know the negroes' piety in America is such, that a religious negro is worth many dollars more than another, and always sells well; so that the masters like them to get religious, because they are the men that do not rebel, but submit meekly and patiently, and the men who, finding themselves slaves, much as they may hate their position, yet regard one to be their master who is higher than all, and "not with eye service as men pleasers, but with singleness of heart," they endeavour to serve God.

IV. And now I want to press with all my might upon every professing Christian here, THE GREAT NECESSITY OF BRINGING OUT A UNIFORMLY GOOD TESTIMONY CONCERNING RELIGION. Brethren, I feel persuaded if Christ were here to-day, there are some of us who love him so well that we would turn our own cheek to the smiter, rather than he should be smitten. One of Napoleon's officers loved him so well that when a cannon ball was likely to smite the emperor, he threw himself in the way, in order that he might die as a sacrifice for his master. Oh Christian, you would do the same, I think. If Christ were here you would run between him and insult, yea, between him and death. Well, then, I am sure you would not wantonly expose Christ; but remember, every unguarded word you use, every inconsistent act, puts a slur on Christ. The world, you know, does not find fault with you—they lay it all to your Master. If you make a slip to-morrow, they will not say, "That is John Smith's human nature;" they will say, "That is John Smith's religion." They know better, but they will be sure to say it; they will be sure to put all the mischief at the door of Christ. Now, if you could bear the blame yourself you might bear it manfully; but do not allow Christ to bear the blame—do not suffer his escutcheon to be tarnished—do not permit his banner to be trampled in the dust.

Then there is another consideration. You must remember, if you do wrong, the world will be quite sure to notice you. The world carries two bags: in the bag

at the back they put all the Christian's virtues—in the bag in front they put all our mistakes and sins. They never think of looking at the virtues of holy men ; all the courage of martyrs, and all the fidelity of confessors, and all the holiness of saints, is nothing to them ; but our iniquities are ever before them. Please to recollect, that wherever you are, as a Christian, the eyes of the world are upon you ; the Argus eyes of an evil generation follow you everywhere. If a church is blind the world is not. It is a common proverb, " As sound asleep as a church," and a very true one, for most churches are sound asleep ; but it would be a great falsehood if anyone were to say, " As sound asleep as the world," for the world is never asleep. Sleeping is left to the church. And remember, too, that the world always wears magnifying glasses to look at Christians' faults. If a man trips who makes no profession, oh ! it is nothing —you never hear of it ; let a minister do it, let a Christian professor do it, and then comes out the magnifying glass. It is nothing in anybody else, but it is a great sin in us. There are two codes of morality in the world, and it is very right there should be. If we make profession to be God's children, and to have God's grace in our hearts, it is no more wrong in the world to expect more of us than of others than it is for a gardener to expect his plants to grow more quickly on a hot-bed and under a glass-shade than he would out of doors in the cold frost. If we have more privileges, and more culture, and make more profession, we ought to live up to them, and the world is quite right in expecting us to do so.

There is another consideration I must offer you before I have done. Recollect, if you do not bring a good testimony for your religion, an evil testimony will defeat a great deal of good. All the saints in a church but one may be faithful to Christ, and the world will not honour the church for it ; but let one professor in that church turn aside to sin, and you will hear of it for many a day. It is even so in nature. Take the days

in the year. The sun rises and shines upon us, and we do not note it; all things continue as they were: the stars smile sweetly by night, and the day and night roll on in quiet; but there comes one day, a day of thunder and lightning, a day of earthquake and storm, and it is put on the rolls of our history, that such-and-such a remarkable day occurred at such-and-such a time. Why not note the good day? But so it is. The world will only note the evil. You may cross through a country, and you will notice a hundred fair rivers, like silver streams threaded with emeralds running through the pastures, who hears the sound of their waters, as they flow gently to the sea? But there is one precipitous rock, and a waterfall dashes there; you may hear that half a mile off. We never hear anything about the river St. Lawrence, in all its lengths and breadths; it is only the falls of Niagara that we hear of. And so the Christian may flow on in a steady course of life, unseen, unheard; but you are sure to hear of him, if he makes a fall. Be watchful, therefore; your Master cometh. Be watchful: the enemy is at hand even now. O may the Holy Spirit sanctify you wholly, that you may abound in every good work, to the glory of God!

As for you who fear not God, remember, if Christians do sin, that shall not be an excuse for you. Suppose a man you are dealing with says to you, "I cheated you, but I did not make any profession of being honest." You would tell him he was a confirmed rogue. Or if a man were taken before a magistrate, and were to say, "You need not put me in a prison, I never made a profession of being anything but a thief; I never said I would not break into people's chambers and get at their plate baskets!" The magistrate would say, "You speak honestly, but you are by your own confession a great rogue, and I will transport you for life, and you shall never have a ticket of leave." It will be of no use for you at the last day, to say that you never made a profession of wanting to go to heaven or to escape hell, of leaving sin and trusting in Christ. If you never

made a profession of serving God, you may rest assured he will have short work with you. You have made no profession. O there is no judgment required. Depart! Thou didst make no profession of loving me, and now thou shalt have no possession of my glory. Depart, accursed, into everlasting fire. May the Lord deliver us from that, for Jesus' sake.

COME AND WELCOME.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—REVELATION xxii. 17.

THE cry of the Christian religion is the simple word, "Come." The Jewish law said, "Go, and take heed unto thy steps as to the path in which thou shalt walk. Go, and break the commandments, and thou shalt perish; go, and keep them, and thou shalt live." The law was a dispensation of the whip, which drove men before it; the gospel is just of the opposite kind. It is the Shepherd's dispensation. He goeth before his sheep, and he bids them follow him, saying unto them, "Come." The law repels; the gospel attracts. The law shows the distance between God and man; the gospel bridges that distance, and brings the sinner across that great fixed gulf which Moses could never bridge. The fact is, as you will all have to learn, if you know anything of gracious experience, that from the first moment of your spiritual life until you are ushered into glory, the cry of Christ to you will be, "*Come, come* unto me." He will always be ahead of you, bidding you follow him as the soldier follows his leader. He will always go before you to pave your way, and to prepare your path, and he will bid you come after him all through life, and in the solemn hour of death, when you shall lie panting upon your bed, his sweet word with which he shall usher you into the heavenly world shall be—"*Come*, come unto me. Stretch thy wings and fly straight to this world of joy where I am dwelling. Come and be with me where I am."

Delivered on Sunday morning, October 16, 1859, at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

Nay, further than this, this is not only Christ's cry to you; but if you be a believer, this is your cry to Christ—"Come! come!" You will be longing for his second advent; you will be saying, "Come quickly, even so come, Lord Jesus." And you will be always panting for nearer and closer communion with him. As his voice to you is "Come," even so will be your prayer to him, "Come, Lord, and abide in my house. Come, and consecrate me more fully to thy service; come, and without a rival reign; come, occupy alone the throne of my heart."

"Come," then, is the very motto-word of the gospel. I hope to expand that word, this morning, to beat out the golden grain into goldleaf, and may God the Holy Spirit speak this day with his minister, and may some who have never come to Jesus before, now come to him for the first time.

Let us go at once to our text—"Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Now, there are four things very plain from our text, namely, that first, *there is a "water of life;"* that secondly, *the invitation is very wide—"Whosoever will;"* that thirdly, *the path is clear*, for it says, "*Whosoever will, let him come;*" and then again, that, fourthly, *the only rule that is prescribed is—let him take it "freely."* That is the only price demanded, and the only condition, which indeed is not a condition, but a death-blow to all conditions. "Let him come and take the water of life freely."

I. First, then, remember I am about to preach a very simple sermon this morning, dealing with simple souls. I am longing to see sinners brought to Christ; my heart yearns after the multitude of men who see no beauty in him that they should desire him. God has saved many in this place; may he be pleased this morning to bring some wanderer to the Father's house, through the merit of the Son's cross by the Spirit's influence. Well, then, THERE IS A "WATER OF LIFE." Man is utterly ruined and undone. He is lost in a wild waste wilderness. The skin bottle of his righteousness is all

dried up, and there is not so much as a drop of water in it. The heavens refuse him rain, and the earth can yield him no moisture. Must he perish? He looks aloft, beneath, around, and he discovers no means of escape. Must he die? Must thirst devour him? Must he fall upon the desert and leave his bones to bleach under the hot sun? No; for the text declares there is a fountain of life. Ordained in old eternity by God in solemn covenant, this fountain, this divine well, takes its spring from the deep foundations of God's decrees. It gusheth up from the depth which coucheth beneath, it cometh from that place which the eagle's eye hath not seen, and which the lion's whelp hath not passed over. The deep foundations of God's government, the depths of his own essential goodness and of his divine nature —these are the mysterious springs from which gush forth that fountain of the "water of life" which shall do good to man. The Son hath digged this well and bored through massive rocks which prevented this living water from springing upward. Using his cross as the grand instrument he has pierced through rocks; he has himself descended to the lowest depth, and he hath broken a passage by which the love and grace of God, the living water which can save the soul, may well up and overflow to quench the thirst of dying men. The Son hath bidden this fountain freely flow, hath removed the stone which laid upon the mouth thereof, and now having ascended upon high he standeth there to see that the fountain shall never stay its life-giving course, that its floods shall never be dry, that its depths shall never be exhausted. This sacred fountain, established according to God's good will and pleasure in the covenant, opened by Christ when he died upon the cross, floweth this day to give life and health, and joy and peace to poor sinners dead in sin, and ruined by the fall. There is a "water of life."

Let us pause awhile and look at its floods as they come gushing upwards, overflowing on every side, and assuaging men's thirst. Let us look with joyous eye. It is

called the "water of life," and richly doth it deserve its name. God's favour is life, and in his presence there is pleasure for evermore; but this water is God's favour, and consequently life. By this water of life is intended God's free grace, God's love for men, so that if you come and drink, you shall find this to be life indeed to your soul, for in drinking of God's grace, you inherit God's love, you are reconciled to God, God stands in a fatherly relation to you, he loves you, and his great infinite heart yearns towards you.

Again, it is living water not simply because it is love, and that is life, but it saves from impending death. The sinner knows that he must die because he is filthy. He has committed sins so tremendous that God must punish him. God must cease to be just if he does not punish the sins of man. Man when conscious that he has been very guilty, stands shivering in the presence of his Maker, feeling in his soul that his doom is signed, and sealed, and that he must certainly be cast away from all hope, and life, and joy. Come hither then, ye sin-doomed; this water can wash away your sins, and when your sins are washed away, then shall ye live; for the innocent must not be punished. Here is water that can make you whiter than driven snow. What though you be black as Kedar's smoky tents, here is water that can purge you, and wash you to the whiteness of perfection, and make you fair as the curtains of king Solomon. These waters well deserve the name of life, since pardon is a condition of life. Unpardoned we die, we perish, we sink into the depths of hell; pardoned we live, we rise, we ascend to the very heights of heaven. See here, then, this ever-gushing fountain will give to all who take thereof life from the dead, by the pardon of their sins.

"But," saith the poor convicted soul, "this is not all I want, for if all the sins I have ever committed were blotted out, in one ten minutes I should commit many more. If I were now completely pardoned, it would not be many seconds before I should destroy

my soul and sink helplessly again." Ay! but see here, this is living water, it can quench thy thirst of sin; entering into thy soul it shall overcome and cover with its floods thy propensities to evil. It shall cover them first, it shall afterwards drown them, and at last, it shall utterly carry them away, sucking them into its whirlpool-depths where they shall never be found any more for ever. Oh sinners! this fountain of gospel grace can so wash your hearts that you shall no longer love sin, yea, so perfectly can this water refine the soul that it shall one day make you as spotless as the angels who stand before the throne of God, and you too, like them, shall obey the behests of God, hearkening to his commands, and rejoicing to be his servants. This is life indeed, for here is favour, here is pardon, here is sanctity, the renewing of the soul by the washing of water, through the Word.

"But," saith one, "I have a longing within me which I cannot satisfy. I feel sure that if I be pardoned yet there is something which I want—which nothing I have ever heard of, or have ever seen or handled, can satisfy. I have within me an aching void which the world can never fill." "There was a time," says one, "when I was satisfied with the theatre, when the amusements, the pleasures of men of the world, were very satisfactory to me. But lo! I have pressed this olive till it yields no more the generous oil; it is but the dreggy thick excrement thereof that now I can obtain. My joys have faded; the beauty of my fat valley hath become as a faded flower. No longer can I rejoice in the music of this world." Ah! soul, glad am I that thy cistern has become dry, for till men are dissatisfied with this world they never look out for the next; till the God of this world has utterly deceived them they will not look to him who is the only living and true God. But hearken! thou that art wretched and miserable, here is living water that can quench thy thirst. Come hither and drink, and thou shalt be satisfied; for he that is a believer in Christ finds enough for him in Christ now, and enough for ever. The

believer is not the man who has to pace his room, saying, "I find no amusements and no delight." He is not the man whose days are weary, and whose nights are long, for he finds in religion such a spring of joy, such a fountain of consolation, that he is content and happy. Put him in a dungeon and he will find good company; place him in a barren wilderness, still he would eat the bread of heaven; drive him away from friendship, he will find the "friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Blast all his gourds, and he will find shadow beneath the rock of ages; sap the foundation of his earthly hopes, but since the foundation of his God standeth sure, his heart will still be fixed, trusting in the Lord. There is such a fulness in religion, that I can honestly testify from experience,

> "I would not change my blest estate,
> For all that earth calls good or great."

I never knew what happiness was till I knew Christ; I thought I did. I warmed my hands before the fire of sin, but it was a painted fire. But oh, when once I tasted the Saviour's love, and had been washed in Jesu's blood, that was heaven begun below.

> "'Tis heaven on earth, 'tis heaven above,
> To see his face, to taste his love."

Oh, if ye did but know the joys of religion, if ye did but know the sweetness of love to Christ, surely ye could not stand aloof. If ye could but catch a glimpse of the believer when he is dancing for joy, you would renounce your wildest mirth, your greatest joy, to become the meanest child in the family of God. Thus then it is the living water, it is the water of life, because it satisfies our thirst, and gives us the reality of life which we can never find in anything beneath the sky.

And here let me add very briefly, he who once drinks of this water of life, drinks that which will quench his thirst for ever. You shall never thirst again, except it be that you shall long for deeper draughts of this living fountain.

In that sweet manner shalt thou thirst. It shall not be a thirst of pain, it shall be a thirst of loving joy—a happy thirst, you will find it a sweet thing to be thirsting after more of Christ's love. Become a Christian, and thou shalt be satisfied for life; thou shalt then be able to say,—"Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with thee." Thou shalt find an ever-living tree, upon which thou shalt build thy nest, and no axe shall ever fell it, no winds shall ever shake thy quiet resting-place, but thou shalt rest for ever on the dear bosom of the Saviour, where thou shalt find eternal rest, eternal joy and peace. Oh, come and take of him, and drink of the water of life freely.

And, moreover, he who drinketh of this living water shall never die. His body shall see corruption for a little while, but his soul mounting aloft, shall dwell with Jesus. Yea! and his very body when it has passed through the purifying process, shall rise again more glorious than when it was sown in weakness. It shall rise in glory, in honour, in power, in majesty, and united with the soul, it shall everlastingly inherit the joys which Christ has prepared for them that love him. This is the living water; I see the fountain flowing now, freely flowing, sparkling with all these excellent properties. Who would not long to come and drink thereof?

II. In the second place we observe from the text that the invitation is very wide—"WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY." How wide is this invitation! There are some ministers who are afraid to invite sinners, then why are they ministers! for they are afraid to perform the most important part of the sacred office. There was a time I must confess when I somewhat faltered when about to give a free invitation. My doctrinal sentiments did at that time somewhat hamper me. I boldly avow that I am unchanged as to the doctrines I have preached; I preach Calvinism as high, as stern, and as sound as ever; but I do feel, and always did feel an anxiety to invite sinners to Christ. And I do feel also, that not only is such

a course consistent with the soundest doctrines, but that the other course is after all the unsound one, and has no title whatever to plead Scripture on its behalf. There has grown up in many Baptist churches an idea that none are to be called to Christ but what they call *sensible* sinners. I sometimes rebut that by remarking, that I call *stupid* sinners to Christ as well as sensible sinners, and that stupid sinners make by far the greatest proportion of the ungodly. But I glory in the avowal that I preach Christ even to *insensible* sinners—that I would say even to the dry bones of the valley, as Ezekiel did, "Ye dry bones live!" doing it as an act of faith; not faith in the power of those that hear to obey the command, but faith in the power of God who gives the command to give strength also to those addressed, that they may be constrained to obey it. But now listen to my text; for here, at least, there is no limitation. But sensible or insensible, all that the text saith is, "Whosoever *will*, let him come and take the water of life freely."

The one question I have to ask this morning is, art thou willing? if so, Christ bids thee take the water of life. Art thou willing? if so, be pardoned, be sanctified, be made whole. For if thou art willing Christ is willing too, and thou art freely invited to come and welcome to the fountain of life and grace.

Now mark, the question has to do with the *will*. "Oh," says one, "I am so foolish I cannot understand the plan of salvation, therefore I may not come and drink." But my question has nothing to do with your understanding, it has to do with your will. You may be as big a fool as you will, but if you are willing to come to Christ you are freely invited. If you could not read a single letter in the alphabet, or spell out a word in the book, yet may your lips—ignorant lips though they be—now drink of this water of life. It has nothing to do with your understanding; it does not say "Whosoever *understandeth* let him come," but "whosoever *will*," and I do not doubt but what there are

many souls who when they first come to Christ have very little understanding of the way of salvation, and very little knowledge of the way in which he saves; but they come to Christ, the Holy Ghost makes them willing to come, and so they are saved. Oh ye who have been for many a year wearing the pauper's garb, ye who come here from the workhouse, ye that are ignorant, ye that are despised among men—are you *willing* to be saved? Can you say from your heart, "Lord, thou knowest I would have my sins forgiven?" Then come and welcome. Jesus bids thee come. Let not thine ignorance keep thee away. He appeals, not to thine understanding, but to thy will.

"Oh," says one, "I can understand the plan of salvation, but I cannot repent as I would. Sir, *my heart* is so hard, I cannot bring the tear to my eye. I cannot feel my sins as I would desire.

> 'My heart how dreadful hard it is,
> How heavy here it lies;
> Heavy and cold within my breast,
> Just like a rock of ice.'"

Ay, but this text has nothing to do with your heart; it is with your *will*. Are you willing? Then be your heart hard as the nether millstone if thou art willing to be saved I am bidden to invite thee. "Whosoever *will*," not "whosoever feels," but "whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." "Yes," says one, "I can honestly say I am willing, but my heart will not soften. I wish that grace would change me. I can say I wish that Christ would soften my heart. I do desire that he would put the living fire within my cold breast and make me repent, and make me love him, and make me believe in him. *I am willing*." Well, then, the text is for thee, "Whosoever *will*, let him come." If thou art willing thou art freely invited to Christ. "No," saith one, "but I am such a great sinner. I have been a drunkard; I have been a lascivious man; I have gone far astray from the paths

of rectitude. I would not have all my sins known to my fellow creatures. How can God accept of such a wretch as I am, such a foul creature as I have been ?" Mark thee, man ! There is no reference made here to thy past life. It simply says, "whosoever will." Art thou willing ? Art thou willing to be saved ? Canst thou say, "Now, Lord, I am willing to be saved, give me a new heart ; I am willing to give up my sins ; I am willing to be a Christian ; I am willing to believe and willing to obey, but oh for this no strength have I, Lord, I have the will ; give me the power." Then thou art freely invited to come, if thou art but willing. There is no barrier between thee and Christ except thy stubborn will. If thy will is subdued, and if thou art saying, "Yes, Lord, I am willing," then art thou freely invited. Oh, reject not the invitation, but, come and welcome, sinner come."

But saith one, "I *cannot* come ; I cannot believe ; I cannot do as I would." Well, but it does not say, "Whosoever *can*, let him come," but "whosoever *will*, let him come." Art thou willing ? You know there is many a man that has more will than power, but God estimates us not by our power, but by our will. You see a man on horseback, he is in haste to fetch a doctor for some dying man : the horse is a miserable jade, and will not go as rapidly as the man would like, but you cannot scold him, because you see him whipping and spurring, and thus proving that he would go if he could, and so the master takes the man's will for the deed. So is it with you, your poor heart will not go, it is a sorry, disabled jade, but it would go if it could. So Jesus invites you, not according to what you can, but according to what you will. "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." All the stipulation is—Art thou willing—truly willing ? If so, thou art freely welcome. Thou art earnestly invited to take of the water of life, and that freely too.

Surely as this goes round the hall, there will be many found who will answer to it, and who will say, from all

their hearts, "I am willing: I am willing." Come, let the question go personally round. Let me not talk to you in the mass, but let the arrow reach the individual. Grey head, give thy reply, and let yon fair-haired boy answer also. Are you willing now to be saved—are you willing to forsake sin—willing to take Christ to be your master from this day forth and for ever? Are you willing to be washed in his blood? Willing to be clothed in his righteousness? Are you willing to be made happy—willing to escape from hell, and willing to enter? Strange that it should be necessary to ask such questions, but still it is. Are you willing? Then remember that whatever may be against you—whatever may have defiled you—however black, however filthy, however worthless you may be, you are invited this day to take of the fountain of the water of life freely, for you are willing, and it is said, "Whosoever *will*, let him come."

"Ah!" saith one, "God knows I am willing, but still I do not think I am worthy." No, I know you are not, but what is that to do with it? It is not "whosoever is *worthy*," but "whosoever *will*, let him come." "Well," says one, "I believe that whosoever will may come, but not me, for I am the vilest sinner out of hell." But hark thee, sinner, it says, "*whosoever*." What a big word that is! Whosoever! There is no standard-height here. It is of any height and any size. Little sinners, big sinners, black sinners, fair sinners, sinners double-dyed, old sinners, aggravated sinners, sinners who have committed every crime in the whole catalogue,—*whosoever*. Doth this exempt one? Who can be excluded from this whosoever? It mattereth not who thou mayest be, nor what thou mayest have been, if thou art willing to be saved; free as the air thou breathest is the love and grace of God. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Thus have I tried to show you how broad the invitation is.

III. And now I am about to show you, in the third place, how clear the path is. "WHOSOEVER WILL, LET

HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY." That word "let" is a very curious word, because it signifies two opposite things. "Let" is an old-fashioned word which sometimes signifies "hinder." "He that letteth shall be taken away,"—that is, "He that hindereth." But here, in our text, it means the removing of all hindrance. "*Let* him come:"—methinks I hear Jehovah speaking this. Here is the fountain of love and mercy. But you are too unworthy, you are too vile. Hear Jehovah! He cries, "*Let him come*, he is willing. Stand back, doubts and fears; away with you, let him come; make a straight road; let him come if he be but willing." Then the devil himself comes forward, and striding across the way, he says to the poor trembling soul, "I will spill thy blood; thou shalt never have mercy. I defy thee; thou shalt never believe in Christ, and never be saved." But Christ says, "*Let him come;*" and Satan, strong though he be, quails beneath Jehovah's voice, and Jesus drives him away, and the path stands clear this morning, nor can sin, nor death, nor hell, block up the way, when Jehovah Jesus says, "*Let* him come."

Methinks I see several ministers standing in the way. They are of such high doctrine that they dare not invite a sinner, and they therefore clog the gospel with so many conditions. They will have it that the sinner must feel a certain quantity of experience before he is invited to come, and so they put their sermons up and say, "You are not invited; you are a dead sinner; you must not come; you are not invited; you are a hardened rebel." "Stand back," says Christ, "every one of you, though ye be my servants. *Let him come*, he is willing —stand not in his way." It is a sad thing that Christ's ministers should become the devil's aiders and abettors, and yet sometimes they are, for when they are telling a sinner how much he must feel, and how much he must know before he comes to Christ, they are virtually rolling big stones in the path, and saying to the willing sinner, "Thou mayest not come." In the name of

Almighty God, stand back everything this morning that keeps the willing sinner from Christ. Away with you, away with you! Christ sprinkles his blood upon the way, and cries to you, "Vanish, begone, leave the road clear; *let him come;* stand not in his path; make straight before him his way, level the mountains and fill up the valleys; make straight through the wilderness a highway for him to come, to drink of this water of life freely. '*Let him come.*'" Oh, is not that a precious word of command! for it has all the might of Omnipotence in it. God said, "Let there be light and there was light," and he says, "Let him come," and come he will and must, that is but willing to come. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." And now, sinner, remember God says, "*come.*" Is there anything in thy way? Remember, he adds, "*Let him come.*" He bids everything stand out of thy way. Standing one day in the court-house, some witness was required, I forget his name; it may have been Brown, for instance, in one moment the name was announced, "Brown, Samuel Brown," by-and-by twenty others take up the cry, "Samuel Brown, Samuel Brown." There was seen a man pushing his way through, "Make room," said he, "make room, his honour calls me," and though there were many in his path, they gave way, because his being called was a sufficient command to them, not to hinder him, but to let him come. And now, soul, if thou be a willing sinner, though thy name is not mentioned—if thou be a willing sinner, thou art as truly called as though thou wert called by name, and therefore, push through thy fears. Make elbow room and come; they that would stop thee are craven cowards. *He* has said "Let him come," and they cannot keep you back; Jehovah has said, "Let him come," and it is yours now to say, "I will come." There is nothing that shall hinder me, I will push through every thing and

> 'I'll to the gracious King approach,
> Whose sceptre mercy gives,'

I will go to the fountain and take of the water of life freely."

IV. And now this brings me to the last head, the condition which is the death of all conditions—LET HIM TAKE IT FREELY. Methinks I see one here who is saying "I would be saved and I will do what I can to be worthy of it." The fountain is free, and he comes with his halfpenny in his hand, and that a bad one, and he says, "Here, sir, give me a cup of this living water to drink; I am well worthy of it, for see the price is in my hand." Why, man, if thou could'st bring the wealth of Potosi, or all the diamonds of Golconda, and all the pearls of Ormuz, you could not buy this most costly thing. Put up your money, you could not have it for gold or silver. The man brings his merit, but heaven is not to be sold to merit-mongers. Or perhaps you say "I will go to church regularly. I will give to the poor, I will attend my meeting-house, I will take a sitting, I will be baptised, I will do this and the other, and then no doubt I shall have the water of life." Back, miserable herd, bring not your rags and rubbish to God, he wants them not. Stand back, you insult the Almighty when you tender anything as payment. Back with ye; he invites not such as you to come. He says come freely. He wants nothing to recommend you. He needs no recommendation. You want no good works. Do not bring any. But you have no good feelings. Nevertheless you are willing, therefore come. He wants no good feelings of you. You have no belief and no repentance, yet nevertheless you are willing.

> "True belief and true repentance,
> Every grace that brings us nigh,
> Without money,
> Come to Jesus Christ and buy."

Do not try to get them yourself—come to him, and he will give them to you. Come just as you are; it is "freely," "without money and without price." The drinking fountains at the corners of our streets are

valuable institutions; but I cannot imagine anyo being so foolish, as when he comes to the drinki fountains fumbling for his purse, and saying, "I cann drink because I have not five pounds in my pocket Why, however poor the man is, there is the fountai and poor as he is he may drink of it. It is put the for the public. Thirsty souls as they go by, wheth they are dressed in fustian or in broad cloth, don't loo for any warrant for drinking; they come and drink it freely. Here it is; the liberality of some good frie has put it there, and they take it and ask no questio whatever. Perhaps the only persons that ever nee to go thirsty through the street, where there is a drin ing fountain, are the fine ladies and gentlemen who a in their carriages. They are very thirsty, and cann think of being so vulgar as to get out to drink. would bemean them, they think, to drink at a comm drinking fountain, so they go with parched lips. O how many there are that are rich, rich in their own goo works, that cannot come to Christ. "I will not saved," they say, "in the same way as a harlot or swearer. What! go to heaven the same way as chimney sweep! Is there no pathway to glory, b the path which a Magdalen may take? I will not saved that way." Then you fine gentry may rema without. You are not bidden to come, for you are n willing. But remember,

> "None are excluded hence but those
> Who do themselves exclude;
> Welcome the learned and polite,
> The ignorant and rude."

"Whosoever will, let him come." Let him bring nothi to recommend him. Let him not imagine he can gi any payment to God, or any ransom for his soul; f the one condition that excludes all conditions is, "L him come and take the water of life freely." There a man of God here, who has drank of the river of t water of life many times; but he says, "I want t

know more of Christ, I want to have nearer fellowship with him; I want to enter more closely into the mystery of his sacrifice; I want to understand more and more of the fellowship of his sufferings, and to be made comformable unto his death." Well, believer, drink freely. You have filled your bowl of faith once, and you drank the draught off, fill it again, drink again, and keep on drinking. Put your mouth to the fountain if you will, drink right on. As good Rutherford says in one of his letters, "I have been sinking my bucket down into the well full often, but now my thirst after Christ has become so insatiable, that I long to put the well itself to my lips, and drain it all, and drink right on." Well take it freely as much as ever you can. You have come now into the field of Boaz, you may pick up every ear that you can find, nay more than that, you may carry away the sheaves if you like, and more than that, you may claim the whole field to be yours if you will. The eating and drinking at Christ's table is like that of Ahasuerus, only in an opposite way. It is said of that table, none did compel; it is said of this, none doth withhold: none can restrain. If there be a big vessel full of this holy water, drink it all up, and if there be one that holdeth twelve firkins, drink it, yea, drink it all, and thou shalt find that even then there is as much as ever. In Christ there is enough for all, enough for each, enough for evermore; and none shall ever have need to say that there was not enough in Christ for him. Drink freely. So you see that there are two meanings—drink without price, and drink without stint.

Then, again, we have an old proverb that there are certain guests who come to our houses who are more free than they are welcome. They make free themselves, and go further than we can bid them welcome. But with regard to those who come to the fountain of living waters, you may make as free as you will and you are welcome; make as free as you can, take this water as you will, Christ will not grudge you. He that stands by the fountain will never mourn because you

drink too much; he will never be dissatisfied because such a black fellow as you has dared to wash himself in the living stream. No, but the blacker you are the more will he rejoice that you have been washed; the more thirsty you are the more will his soul be gladdened to have you drink even to the full and be satisfied. He is not enriched by withholding; rather he is enriched in joy by giving. It is as much a pleasure to Christ to save you as it will be to you to be saved. He is just as glad to see the poor, the lame, the halt, and the blind sit at his table as ever they can be to sit there. He is just as pleased to carry men to heaven as they themselves can be when they drink of the river of joy at the fountain-head of eternity, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

And now I do not know what to say further. My text is such a precious one, that I cannot enter into the fulness of its freeness and sweetness. Remember, my dear friends, if you are willing to be saved, God requires nothing of you except that you will yield yourselves up to Christ. If you are willing to be saved none can prevent; there is no obstacle. You are not going like the daughters of Hobab to a well from which you will be driven by the coarseness and rudeness of shepherds. You are come where Jesus stands—stands with open arms, stands with open mouth, crying to you this day, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely."

And now will you refuse the invitation? See that you refuse not him that speaketh! Will you go this day and abuse the free mercy of God? Shall this very mercy lead you into more sin? Will you be wicked enough to say, that because grace is free, therefore you will continue in sin year after year?

Oh do not so; grieve not the Spirit of God; to-day is the accepted time; to-day is the day of salvation. If ye turn not he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. You have been warned, your conscience has often pricked you, now this day you are

sweetly invited. But the time of warnings and invitations will not last for ever: they will soon be over, and when your funeral knell is tolling, you shall be in that lake of fire, that land of misery and pain, where not a drop of water shall ever cool your burning tongue. As you would escape from the flames of hell, as you would be delivered from the eternal torments which God will certainly hurl upon you like hailstones, I beseech thee now consider thy ways, and if now thou art willing thou art invited and none can keep thee back from his mercy. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Shall I preach in vain? Will you all go away and not take the water of life? Come, soul—is there not one at least that God shall give me this day for my hire—not one? May I not take one of you by the hand, some poor sinning erring brother? Come, brother, let us go together and drink. O may the Holy Ghost incline you. Take it, my brother. See on that bloody tree Jesus hangs; behold he pays his life a ransom for your sins and mine. Believe on him, trust him, commit your soul to him and be saved. Will you not say in your soul

> "Just as I am without one plea
> But that thy blood was shed for me
> And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
> O lamb of God I come, I come?"

And as my Master is true and faithful, he cannot cast away one soul that cometh, for "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." O Spirit, now draw reluctant hearts, and now give timid souls courage to believe for Jesus' sake. Amen.

AM I CLEAR OF HIS BLOOD?

"The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."
GEN. iv. 10.

CAIN was of the wicked one and slew his brother "The way of Cain" is not hard to describe. He i too proud to offer atonement for his sin; he prefers hi own way of sacrifice; he presents a bloodless oblation he hates the obedience of faith; he smites the faithfu Abel. See ye the way of Cain, and beware, O proud self righteous ones, lest ye run therein, for the steps are fe from self-righteous pride to hatred of true believers, an murder is not far in advance. There is the seed of ever infamy in the proud spirit of self-justification, and it i a great mercy that it does not oftener show itself in a its terrific ripeness. Look ye, bold boasters of your ow merits, at the mangled body of the first martyr, for thi is the full-blown development of your rebellious self conceit. From all pride and vain-glory, from all self righteousness and hatred of the cross of Christ, goo Lord deliver us.

This is not, however, the drift of my discourse thi morning, I have rather to indicate the method in whic we also may be guilty of this sin of blood-guiltines concerning our brother.

Dear friends, I feel assured that the text of this morn ing, terrible as it must have been in the ears of Cain, ough to ring in your ears and mine; and it may be that whil that cry is heard again, though at the distance of man thousand years, it may awaken some here present t a sense of guilt, and to a desire for amendment; an thus the blood of Abel may speak good, though terrib

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things to them, and prepare their ears to listen to the voice of that other blood, "which speaketh better things than that of Abel."

First, we shall this morning *enquire for the criminals whose brothers' blood cries from the ground;* next, we will endeavour *to show the execrable character of the crime;* then, thirdly, *we will expect the judgment;* and fourthly, *we will exhort the guilty ones to turn from their ways, and to hear the voice of mercy.*

I. First, then, we are to MAKE A SEARCHING ENQUIRY FOR THE CRIMINALS.

I do not intend to say much this morning, about the act of actually slaying one's brother. The question of the rightness of war is a moot point even among moral men. Among those who read their Bibles, the allowance of defensive war may, perhaps, still be a question; but any other sort of war must certainly be condemned by the man who is a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall say nothing, however, or but very little, concerning the criminality of those ambitious and unscrupulous persons who hurry nations into war without cause. Lust of dominion and a false pride are setting the United States on a blaze. I know at this time a tragic incident connected with the present war in America. Four brothers left one of our villages in Oxfordshire, two of whom, if now alive, are in one army, and two of them in the other; and, I doubt not, as desperately as any of their comrades, they are thirsting for each other's blood. What horrors cluster around the iniquity of civil war. On yonder soil it is the blood of brothers that crieth from the ground. Men are fighting the one against the other in this lamentable conflict *for no justifiable cause.* The one cause which justified the war, as we thought—the snapping of the fetters of the slave—is gone, emancipation is not proclaimed, the bondman is forgotten. What might have been a struggle for the rights of man, is now a shameful and abominable slaughter of brothers by brothers; and a cry is going up to heaven from those blood-red fields which God will hear, and will yet avenge

on both sides. Oh that they would sheathe their sword! and end it once for all! What mattereth it if there be two nations or one, better two in peace, than one divided with intestine strife! How much better to have ever twenty nations of living men, than one nation of mangled corpses! What signifieth it to the survivors if they have all the honour and dignity of conquerors, when they are stained up to their elbows in the blood of their fellow-men? Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, "Consider your ways." Arise, ye that draw your sword against your fellows, and weep like the weeping of Ramah of old, and make your cities like Bochim, because of your iniquities; go ye back to your homes in peace, beat your swords into ploughshares, and your spears into pruning hooks, for Jehovah will have none of them; he casteth out your armies like dung upon the field, because ye smite every man his kinsman and his fellow! That, however, is not my subject this morning. May God grant that whatever may come of this terrible struggle his name may be glorified; at present I see nothing but a carnival of madmen—hell let loose; and much I fear that an evil demon has deceived both nations, and made them like ravening wolves, and roaring lions.

I have to deal with *you*, however, and not with those across the ocean; let us come, therefore, to the point. There are many persons whose brother's blood cries to God from the ground. *There is the seducer;* he spake with honeyed words, and talked of love, but the poison of asps was under his tongue, for lust was in his heart. He came to a fair temple as a worshipper, but he committed infamous sacrilege, and left *that* to be the haunt of demons which once was the palace of purity. Such men are received into society; they are looked upon as gentlemen, while the fallen woman, the harlot-sister, shall may hide herself beneath the shadow of night. None will make excuse for her sin; but the man, the criminal—he is called a respectable and reputable man—he may fill places of trust, and posts of honour, and there are none who point the finger of scorn at him. Sir, the voice

of that poor fallen sister's blood crieth to heaven against thee, and in the day of judgment her damnation shall be on thy skirts; all the infamy into which thou hast plunged her shall lie at thy door; and among the dreadful sights of hell, two eyes shall glare at thee through the murky darkness like the eyes of serpents, burning their way into thine inmost soul. "Thou didst deceive, and decoy me to the pit," saith she, "thine arms dragged me down to hell, and here I lie to curse thee for ever and ever as the author of my eternal ruin." I know I address some such this morning; it were not possible that all men here were pure and spotless. Hear ye while yet there is time for your repentance, for the voice of her blood crieth unto God from the ground for vengeance.

Then there are men *who educate youth in sin.* Satan's captains and marshals; strong men with corrupt hearts, who are never better pleased than when they see the buds of evil swelling and ripening into crime. We have known some such; men of an evil eye, who not only loved sin themselves, but delighted in it in others; patted the boy on his back when he uttered his first oath; rewarded him when he committed his first theft. Satan has his Sunday-school teachers; hell has its missionaries who compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and make him tenfold more a child of hell than they are themselves. Most of our villages are cursed with one such wretch, and is there a street in London which is not the haunt of one such fiend, or more? Oh, do I speak to any here who have applauded and praised young persons when they have commenced walking in the paths of infamy? Wretch, hast thou sought to entangle them in thy net? Hast thou, like the spider, thrown first one film about them and then another, till thou hast them safely in thy coils to drag them down to the den of Beelzebub? Then the voice of thy brother's blood crieth from the ground, and at the judgment this shall be a witness which thou shalt not be able to confute, the witness of the blood of souls ruined by thy foul and evil training. Beware ye who hunt for the precious life!

Ay, and I know some base men who, *if they see young converts, will take a pride in putting stumbling-blocks in their way.* They no sooner discover that there is some little working of conscience, than they laugh, they sneer, they point the finger. How often have I seen this in the husband who seeks to prevent the wife's attendance at the house of God; in the young man who jeers at his companion because he felt something of the power of religion! Is not this too frequent in our great establishments in London; where one young man kneels to pray and many are found to laugh at him and hurl some foul term at his head; not content to perish themselves. Like dogs pursuing a hart so will the wicked haunt the godly. Oh! you who are the enlisting-sergeants for the Black Prince of Darkness, you who seem never so happy as when you set your traps for souls to inveigle them to destruction, solemnly do I warn you. Oh! take the warning, lest God's avenging angel, without warning, should soon overtake you with the dividing sword which shall smite you even to the neck, and make you feel how terrible a thing it is to have tried to ruin the servants of the living God.

Then *there is the infidel,* the man who is not content to keep his sin in his own breast, but must needs publish his infamy, he ascends the platform and blasphemes the Almighty to his face; defies the Eternal; takes Scripture to make it the subject of unhallowed jest; and makes religion a theme for comedy. Take heed, sir, there will be a tragedy by-and-bye, in which you shall be the chief sufferer! What shall I say of those men who are more diligent by far than half God's ministers are, whose names we see placarded on every wall, who will go from town to town, especially where in greatest numbers artisans are dwelling, and never seem content unless they are preaching against everything that is pure, and lovely, and of good report; uttering things which would make your cheeks blanch if you heard them, and at the very reading of which the marrow of your bones might melt—dreadful things against the

Most High, such as David heard when he said, "Horror hath taken hold of me because of the wicked that keep not thy law." Oh, sirs! should I address such persons here, the voice of your brother's blood crieth to Jehovah this day. The young men you have deluded, the working men you have led astray, the sinners whose lullaby you have sung, the souls that you have poisoned with your foul draughts, the multitudes, the multitudes that you have deceived—all these shall stand up at the last, an exceeding great army, and pointing their fingers at you, shall demand your swift destruction, because you decoyed them to their doom.

And *what shall I say of the unfaithful preacher;* the slumbering watchman of souls, the man who swore at God's altar that he was called of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word of God; the man upon whose lips men's ears waited with attention while he stood like a priest at God's altar to teach Israel God's law; the man who performed his duties half-asleep, in a dull and careless manner until men slept too and thought religion but a dream? What shall I say of *the minister of unholy life,* whose corrupt practice out of the pulpit has made the most telling things in the pulpit to be of no avail, has blunted the edge of the sword of the Spirit, and turned the back of God's army in the day of battle? Ay, what shall I say of the man who has amused his audience with pretty things when he ought to have roused their consciences, who has been rounding periods when he ought to have denounced the judgment of God; who has been preaching a dead morality when he ought to have lifted Christ on high as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness. What shall I say, brethren, of those who have dwindled away their congregations, who have sown strife and schism in Churches of Christ once happy, peaceful, and prosperous? What shall I say of the men who, out of the pulpit, have made a jest of the most solemn things, whose life has been so devoid of holy passion and devout enthusiasm that men have thought truth to be fiction, religion a stage-play, prayer a nullity,

the Spirit of God a phantom, and eternity a joke? Among all who will need eternal compassion, surely the unfaithful, unholy, unearnest minister of Christ will be the most pitiable! What did I say? Nay, rather the most contemptible, the most despicable, the most accursed! Surely, every thunderbolt shall make his brow its target, and every arrow of God shall seek his conscience as its mark. If I must perish, let me suffer anyhow but as a minister who has desecrated the pulpit by a slumbering style of ministry, by a want of passion for souls. God knoweth how ofttimes this body trembles with horror at the thought lest the blood of souls should be required at my hands; and I cannot, and I hope I never may, I cannot understand that lifeless performance of duty, that cold and careless going through of services which, alas! is too common. How shall such men answer for it at the bar of God—the smooth things, the polite and honeyed words, the daubing of men with the untempered mortar of peace, peace, when they should have dealt with them honestly as in God's name? Oh, sirs, if we never play the Boanerges, we shall hear God's thunders in our ears, and that for ever and ever, and, cursed of men, and cursed of the Most High, shall we be without end. In Tophet we shall have this wail peculiar to ourselves, "We preached what we did not feel; we testified of what we did not know; men received not our witness, for we were hypocrites and deceivers, and now we go down, richly deserving it, to the very lowest depths of perdition."

But, my hearers, think not when I thus speak of the ministry that I am about to permit you to escape. The voice of your brother's blood crieth to God from the ground, even though you be no infidel lecturer, though you have never been debauched, though you have taught no heresy, though you have spread no schism. *If your life is unholy your brother's blood is on your skirts.* "Oh," saith one, "if I sin I sin to myself." Impossible! As well might the miasma say "I am deadly to myself alone;" as well might the cholera say "my deadly breath is for

myself only." Your example spreads; you, like the leper, leave uncleanliness on everything you touch. The very atmosphere which surrounds you breeds contagion. What others see you do, they learn to do. Some may rival you, and exceed you, but if you taught them their letters, and they learn to read in hell's book better than you, all that they learn afterwards will come to your door, because the elements of sin they learned from your practice. I am afraid many people never look at their transgressions in this light. Why, you cannot help being leaders and teachers. If in your own house you are a drunkard, your boys will be drunkards too! I have heard of a man who flogged his boy for swearing, swearing at him all the time he did it. We know instances of men who feel as if they would sooner bury their children than see them grow up such as they are themselves, but yet how can it be helped? Your practice must and will influence your children; nay, not your children only, but all with whom you come into connection in the mercantile world. Do not think, sir, if you are a great employer that your men can know what your life is without being affected by that knowledge. There may be some among them who have an inward principle which will not yield to temptation, but I know of hardly anything more dangerous than for a number of operatives to come constantly into contact with one whom they look up to as a master, who is also a master of the arts of sin, and a doctor of damnation to their souls. Oh! take care, if not for yourselves yet for others, or else, as sure as you live, the voice of your brother's blood will cry unto God from the ground.

To come yet closer home to this present audience. *How much of the blood of man will lie at the door of careless professors.* You that make a profession of being Christians and yet live in sin, you are the murderers of souls by thousands. And you, too, who are moral enough in your conversation, and regular in your attendance on the outward forms of religion, you who never weep over sinners, you who never pray for them, you who

never speak to them, you who leave all *that* to your minister, and think you have nothing to do with it, the voice of your brother's blood crieth from the ground to heaven. There died a man in your court the other day; you spoke not to him about his soul; his blood cries to heaven against you. You live in a villa in the country; there was a neighbour of yours, you were on speaking terms with him, but you talked not to him about his soul; he is dead; he is gone; his blood crieth to God against you! You have relations, relations to whom you could speak with familiarity; you have talked to them of business; you have befriended them, perhaps, in their needs, but you have never said a word to them about escaping from hell and fleeing to heaven. When you shall hear the mournful news that they have departed this life will not their blood cry against you from the ground where they are buried? You work, young man, in an establishment where you are somewhat respected, and, without intrusiveness, you might often say a good word for your Master, but you do it not; the blood of your fellows shall cry against you if they perish! Do not think the minister is the only man who is responsible for souls. God has made you all watchmen; all of you, in your spheres, are to be watchers for the souls of men; and "If the watchman warn them not," saith the Lord, "they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands."

I know you do not think of this, and I am sorrowfully conscious that I do not feel it myself so much as I ought to do. Ah! the servants of Satan shame me; they shame me, they shame me! There comes at night a message to some of you who are the servants of Satan—"The master is come, and he calleth for thee." You leave your wife and your children without a tear, you go to your master's house, and there are cups, foul cups, passing round, and you will drink, and drink, and drink, and drink still on; never denying your master; confessing him with many an oath; saying to your comrades many things which injure your poor souls; and

yet you do it so bravely, oh, so bravely! You hardly know how you get home at night, but when the morning comes, and you wake, there is the redness of the eyes, the headache, and the sickness; but the next night when your master wants you you go again; and so you will do year after year, even though delirium tears you like a whirlwind. But here am I, a servant of God, and when my Master calls for me and bids me go and confess him, I am tempted to be still, and when he tells me to speak to yonder man I would wickedly avoid the task; and whereas you confess your master and imprecate a curse upon your head, how often do some of us confess our master as timidly as if we feared a curse, when instead thereof it is by confession that the curse is turned away! Oh, it is enough to make us Christians ashamed to think how sinners will confess their god! Hear them at night, as they reel home through the streets, they are not ashamed of their lord and master. Hear how they swear, and defy heaven! They are ashamed of nothing for their lord; and yet we, who have heaven for our reward, and such a Christ to serve, and one so good and gracious to us—look at us—look at us! What poor lovers of our Saviour are we! What poor lovers of the souls of men! I know this is not true of all of you, for there are some of you who love men's souls. I have delighted to see in many of you that deep earnestness which makes you yearn for the conversion of others. You will sometimes take your stand at the corner of the street, and though you cannot speak as you would, yet the tears running down your cheeks prove your earnestness. There are many women among you, too, who have spoken a good word for Christ in strange places, and have never been ashamed of him. But oh! there are some of you, the members of this Church, over whom the angels of glory might weep, for what do you for Christ? What do you give to Christ? You are content to go to heaven yourselves, but you let your neighbours perish for lack of knowledge, and neither the Mission will you help, nor anything else besides. The

blood, the blood of dying London crieth from the ground against you before God. The perishing crowds of every street, and every court, and every alley send up their wail to heaven—"O God! thy professing people have forgotten us." The daughter of Zion is become like the ostrich of the desert; the tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of its mouth for want of moisture!! O God, wilt thou not visit thy Church for this, and make these, thy people, that forget the souls of men, smart even to the quick!

I do not know whether I have seized hold of any of your consciences, but if I have, may God the Holy Ghost get such a grip of you that he may never let you rest till you say, "Great God, in thy name I will do something, that the next time I hear the bell toll I may be able to say, 'I did what I could for that man, and if his soul has perished, his blood does not lie at my door, for I did tell him the way of salvation, I did exhort him to flee from the wrath to come.'" I am afraid none of us are altogether guiltless here; we must all take some degree of sin to our own consciences. I fear against every one of us, to some extent, the voice of our brother's blood crieth unto heaven because of our sloth.

II. But to pass on; I was, in the second place, to HOLD UP THIS CRIME TO EXECRATION, the chief point being whose blood it is; it is the blood of *our brethren*: "The voice of *thy brother's* blood crieth unto me from the ground." All men are our brethren; let any of them perish, if we have not done our best for their conversion, their blood hath a fearful and telling cry against us when it reaches to heaven. But I shall rather dwell this morning upon certain special cases. Perhaps, young man, *it is your natural brother's blood* that cries against you. You have been converted to God say these three, four, ten, or twenty years. You have done nothing to your brother's conversion; never written him a letter begging him to think of his state; never spoken a kind and gentle word to him about Christ. No, you have been content to let him know you were a Christian, and

were half afraid of that, but you have done nothing for him. Will not your brother, if he perishes, be well able to say, "My brother and I did hang at the same breast, and were rocked in the same cradle; we played together; 'we filled one home with glee;' he professed to know the way of life, but he never told it to me; he professed to have pardon for his sins, but he never told me how I might find it too; he suffered me to go unpitied to my doom without a tear"? Will not the voice of such blood as that cry against us if we have been guilty?

It may be, however, it is *the blood of your father or mother*. Some of you young people have come to London, and God has met with you in this house of prayer; you still have ungodly parents in the country, have you quite forgotten them? What if your grey-headed sire should die? You know he never thinks of God; what if he should die before his son has talked to him! Oh, you have a strange power, you sons and daughters; if you will only pluck the old man by the sleeve, and say, "Father, by the child's love I bear you I would fain see you saved!" And do you fling this power away? Would you see your father and mother sold to slavery, and if it were in your power to redeem them would you keep the sordid pelf? Or if you saw them sick, would you spare your feet and not run for a physician? Or if you saw them sinking in the stream, would you not leap in, at the peril of your own life, and rescue them? And will you let them perish, perish for ever, without a struggle on your part? Will you see them go down to the depths without stretching out a helping hand? I cannot think thus of you if God has touched your hearts!

But what shall I say to those who are not only careless of parents, but are *neglecting their own children?* Mother, what if the voice of your child's blood should cry to God against you? You trained that child up without the fear of God. You sent your boy and girl to school on the Sunday it is true, but that was only to get rid of them What was your own example to them? Bad.

What was the father's example? Vicious. When your boy grows up he becomes reckless. You cannot get him to come to a place of worship with you *now*. No, but if you had brought him when he was a child, it may be he would have been here now; and, inasmuch as you have tutored him for Satan, if that boy of yours goes down to the pit, his soul shall cry against you. Up to heaven shall it send its shriek—"Oh God! the mother that did bear me, and the man that did beget me, were as cruel to me as if I were not their child, for they suffered me to come here without weeping for me, without praying for me, without taking me in their arms of loving supplication, and pleading that I might be saved!"

Look at this again in the case of some of you against whom the indictment lies, that *you have done injury to your servants*. Oh! I know great cotton-factors, builders and traders, that have many men in their employment, and have much to answer for. Sirs, though it is your skill and your capital that brings in your wealth, have you no responsibility towards the men who day and night toil for you? You pay them their wages, but think you your responsibility has ceased with that? Are they not the very bones and sinews of your establishment, and after taking everything into consideration, do you not owe far more to them than ever the best remuneration can pay? And what if you have left their spiritual state uncared for; have said, "Oh, it is no business of mine what they do with their Sundays; I do not care what they do when they are out of the mill, or away from the workshop"? What, sirs, do you think that as those hundreds of souls go before God they will lay no impeachment against you? Do you think they will not arraign you at God's bar? I tell you, and I think I speak in the Spirit of God when I say this, you shall find that the voices of your neglected workers, the voices of those whom you never sought to bless with spiritual instruction, shall cry against you from the ground. Would that I had an audience, for the moment, consisting more largely of such persons!

There are some here who can, I think, plead exemption, for they have done much to spread spiritual light amongst those who toil for them; but I do fear me they are rather the exception than the rule, and that there are many who think no more of the men that work for them than of their horses, and some not so much; and who take as much interest in the spirit of the beast that goeth downwards as in the soul of man that goeth upwards. Let it be so no more. Employers, contractors, you that have great influence, I do entreat you—shall I fall upon my knees to do it? I could not then do it more earnestly —see to it that your brother's blood lie not on your skirts throughout eternity!

Oh! there is one sinner who can look upon this in a solemn light! Who is it that has gone down to the pit? You man yonder—who is it that died but a few days ago? The woman that loved you as she loved her own soul; who idolized you; who thought you an angel. Shall I say it before God and to your face?—you ruined her. And what next, sir? You cast her off as though she were but dirt, and threw her into the kennel with a broken heart. And being there, her god having cast her off—for you were her god—she fell into despair, and despair led to dreadful consequences, and to direr ruin still. She has gone, and you are glad of it; *glad of it*, for you will hear no more of her now, you say. Sir, you *shall* hear of it; you *shall* hear of it; you *shall* hear of it! As long as you live her spirit shall haunt you; track you to the filthy joy which you have planned for a future day; and on your death bed she shall be there to twist her fingers in your hair, to tear your soul out of your body, and drag it down to the hell appointed for such fiends as you; for you spilt her blood, the blood of her that trusted you—a fair, frail thing, worthy to be an angel's sister, and you pulled her down, and made her a devil's tool! God save you! for if he does not, your damnation shall be seven-fold. Oh! thou son of Belial, what shall be thy doom when God dealeth with thee as thou deservest? Are these hot words? Not

half so hot as I would make them. I would send them hissing into your souls if I were able; not so much to condemn you as with the hope that though you cannot make good the mischief you have done, you may yet turn from the error of your ways to seek a Saviour's blood, and find pardon for this great iniquity. Oh! dear friends, let us all take something of our text home. When we think of friends who are dead and gone, are there none over whose corpses we must say "I did not do what I could for this man; I did not do what I could for this woman"? I know when I go down to the village where I used to preach, and as I look upon the houses, I am apt to question myself—Was I as earnest with the people as I used to be? I can say I hope I never flinched from telling them all the truth, though sometimes it had to be very rudely and roughly spoken; but yet God knoweth I do sometimes smite myself to think I did not weep over them more, and did not entreat them more to be won to Christ. And you, too, that sit in these pews so often, many of you are joyful converts to Christ, but numbers of you are still unsaved. What if any of you should be able to say at the last, "We trusted our minister; we hung upon his lips; we were never absent; we loved the Sabbath-day, but oh, he did not tell us of our sin; he did not plead with us to be saved; he left us to ourselves; he was cold when his heart should have been hot; he was a man without tears, and had a heart without sympathy for us!" Oh! sirs, God grant ye may never be able to say that of me. God save you, for my soul longeth for you. He is my witness how earnestly I long for you all in the bowels of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Come unto him! Come unto him! Let not your blood cry out against me! Oh, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust him; trust him now, that you may be saved, and that at last I may be able to say, "Here am I and the children whom thou hast given me; thou hast kept them through thy power, and they are preserved even to the end; unto thee be glory for ever and ever!"

III. We are in the third place, and that only for a moment, TO EXPECT THE JUDGMENT. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." It does not cry to a deaf ear, but to the ear of One who hears and feels the cry, and will certainly make bare his arm to smite the offender and to avenge the wrong. Seducer, infidel, tempter of the young, God hears the cry that goes up against thee, and this is its burden: it comes from souls damned through thine influence, and they say—"Lord give him his portion with the tormentors; let him suffer, for *we* suffer; he slew *us*, avenge our death!" He will do it, and the day shall come when swift destruction shall overtake thee, and as with a rod of iron will he break thee; as a potter's vessel so will he dash thee in pieces, and who shall deliver thee out of his hand?

The cry goeth up to heaven against barren, careless, cold-hearted professors, from many in London, untaught and untrained, who are on their beds to-day in the jaws of death, they cry out I say against you, careless Christians, and they say "Lord, take away their privileges from them; Lord, take them away from the Church which they disfigure and dishonour; Lord, take away these trees that bear no leaves for the healing of the nations; sweep away this salt which hath lost its savour; Lord, cast these candles that give no light into the fire; O Lord, take away, take away once for all these cities that are not set on hills, but are hidden from the sight of men." What would you say if God should visit this Church for instance, and take out of it all of you who are useless? How would the catalogue be thinned! How would our lists show here and there the black mark of erasion! Unless you are doing something to win souls, the voice of your brother's blood crieth to God from the ground, and it cries that your privileges may be taken away, and the candlestick moved out of its place. And it will be so, my hearers, it will be so except we all of us arise to serve our Master. We are happy when God does prosper us, but if we get many in our midst who do

nothing for Christ we shall have "Ichabod" written on these walls; the walls that now ring with the song of the multitude shall hear only the wail of a desolate few; the pulpit that now thunders out God's own voice will become a dead, dreary, and voiceless platform; the time will come when your deacons and your elders shall be no more men of earnest hearts, and when you shall grope as the blind in the midnight, and say—"Oh, that God would give us back once more such times as we used to have, which we frittered away through our carelessness, and lost through our lukewarmness."

Further, *how awful must be the cry of this blood from the ground against a minister!* I think I hear it, a cry from earth, from heaven, from hell: "Hurl him from his pulpit. Tear away his vestments! Snatch the book from his blood-stained hand! Smite upon the mouth the dog that will not bark; let his corpse fall before men's eyes; let him be made a hissing and a by-word, because, being made a winner of souls, he dared to trifle, and being made a watchman of a besieged city, he dared to lie down and slumber." "Tear him down; tear him down; tear him down," a hundred voices cry. "Though he be a bishop or a great man in the Church; though his eloquence be unrivalled; though his power be matchless, pluck him down from his high places; miscreant that he is to waste men's time and ruin men's souls for ever!"

And what shall the cry be against *you who still continue by your ill-example to lead others into sin—open sinners and infidels?* It would be an awful thing to pray for a man's damnation; but there are some people I know of who while they live do so much mischief, that if they were dead, men would breathe more freely. I know a village where there lives a man who contaminates half the population. There is a leer upon his face at which virtue blushes; there is a sneer at which even courage quails. He is a wretch so well taught and so deeply instructed in the highest science of iniquity, that wherever he may go he finds none a match for him, either in

his reasoning or in the infamous conclusions which he draws; a man who is a deadly Upas-tree, dropping black poison upon all beneath his shadow. I did think once I would half pray that the man might die and go to his doom, but one must not; and yet, were he gone, the saints might say, "'Tis well," and as over Babylon when she is destroyed and the smoke of her torment goeth up for ever, the saints will say "Hallelujah," so have I thought that over these against whom the blood of many young people cries to God from the ground, when they go at last to their doom, men might almost say, "Hallelujah, for God hath judged the great sinner who did make the people of the earth drunk with the wine of his fornication."

IV. I hope that these terrible things have prepared our minds to hear the better THE VOICE OF EXHORTATION.

If there be the voice of blood crying against us to-day, and we affirm that none of us can altogether escape from it, what shall we do to be rid of the past? Can tears of repentance do it? No. Can promises of amendment make a blank page where there are so many blots and blurs? Ah, no! Nothing that we can do can put away our sin. But may not the future atone? May not future zeal wipe out past carelessness? May not the endeavour of our life that is yet to come, make amends for the indolence or vice of the life that is past? No. The blood of our brethren has been shed, and we cannot gather it up. The mischief we have done is not to be retrieved! O God! souls that are lost through us cannot be saved now; the gates of hell are so shut that they can never be opened. No restitution can we make. The redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever; the sin is not to be washed away by repentance, nor retrieved by reformation. What then? Hopeless despair for you and I, and every one of us, were it not that there is another blood, the blood of one called Jesus, that crieth from the ground too, and the voice of that blood is "Father, forgive them; Father, forgive

them." I hear a voice that says, "Vengeance, vengeance, vengeance," like the voice of Jonah in Nineveh, enough to make every man clothe himself in sackcloth. But a sweeter and a louder cry comes up—"Mercy, mercy, mercy;" and the Father bows his head and says, "Whose blood is that?" and the voice replies, "It is the blood of thine only-begotten, shed on Calvary for sin." The Father lays his thunders by, sheathes his sword, stretches out his hand, and crieth to you, the sons of men, "Come unto me, and I will have mercy upon you; turn ye, turn ye; I will pour out my Spirit upon you and ye shall live." "Repent and believe the gospel." Hate the sin that is past, and trust in Jesus for the future. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; for the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Flee, sinner, flee! The avenger of the blood that thou hast shed pursues thee with hot haste; with feet that are winged, with a heart that is athirst for blood, he pursues thee. Run, man, run! The refuge city is before thee. It is there, along the narrow way of faith. Fly, man, fly, for unless thou reach that city ere he overtake thee he shall smite thee, and one blow shall be thine everlasting ruin. For God's sake do not loiter, man! Those flowers on the left-hand side—care not for them; thou wilt dye that field with thy blood if thou lingerest there. That ale-house on the right hand? Stay for none of these things. He comes! Hark to his footsteps on the hard highway! He comes, he comes, he comes now! Oh, that now thou mayest pass the portals of the refuge-city! Trust the Son of God, and sin is forgiven, and you have entered into everlasting life.

Good Lord, add thy blessing! We are powerless; we can say no more. For Christ's sake, "by his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, by his precious death and burial," bless these souls. Amen.

GETHSEMANE.

"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."—LUKE xxii. 44.

FEW had fellowship with the sorrows of Gethsemane. The majority of the disciples were not there. They were not sufficiently advanced in grace to be admitted to behold the mysteries of "the agony." Occupied with the passover feast at their own houses, they represent the many who live upon the letter, but are mere babes and sucklings as to the spirit of the gospel. The walls of Gethsemane fitly typify that weakness in grace which effectually shuts in the deeper marvels of communion from the gaze of ordinary believers. To twelve, nay, to eleven only was the privilege given to enter Gethsemane and see this great sight. Out of the eleven, eight were left at some distance; they had fellowship, but not of that intimate sort to which the men greatly beloved are admitted. Only three highly favoured ones, who had been with him on the mount of transfiguration, and had witnessed the life-giving miracle in the house of Jairus—only these three could approach the veil of his mysterious sorrow: within that veil even these must not intrude; a stone's-cast distance must be left between. He must tread the wine-press alone, and of the people there must be none with him. Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, represent the few eminent, experienced, grace-taught saints, who may be written down as "Fathers;" these having done business on great waters, can in some degree, measure the huge Atlantic waves of their Redeemer's passion;

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having been much alone with him, they can read his heart far better than those who merely see him amid the crowd. To some selected spirits it is given, for the good of others, and to strengthen them for some future, special, and tremendous conflict, to enter the inner circle and hear the pleadings of the suffering High Priest; they have fellowship with him in his sufferings, and are made conformable unto his death. Yet I say, even these, the elect out of the elect, these choice and peculiar favourites among the king's courtiers, even these cannot penetrate the secret places of the Saviour's woe, so as to comprehend all his agonies. "Thine unknown sufferings" is the remarkable expression of the Greek liturgy; for there is an inner chamber in his grief, shut out from human knowledge and fellowship. Was it not here that Christ was more than ever an "Unspeakable gift" to us? Is not Watts right when he sings—

> "And all the unknown joys he gives,
> Were bought with agonies unknown."

Since it would not be possible for any believer, however experienced, to know for himself all that our Lord endured in the place of the olive-press, when he was crushed beneath the upper and the nether mill-stone of mental suffering and hellish malice, it is clearly far beyond the preacher's capacity to set it forth to you. Jesus himself must give you access to the wonders of Gethsemane; as for me, I can but invite you to enter the garden, bidding you put your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground. I am neither Peter, nor James, nor John, but one who would fain like them drink of the Master's cup, and be baptized with his baptism. I have hitherto advanced only so far as yonder band of eight, but there I have listened to the deep groanings of the man of sorrows. Some of you, my venerable friends, may have learned far more than I; but you will not refuse to hear again the roarings of the many waters which strove to quench the love of the Great Husband of our souls.

Several matters will require our brief consideration. Come, Holy Spirit, breathe light into our thoughts, life into our words.

I. Come hither and behold the SAVIOUR'S UNUTTERABLE WOE.

The emotions of that dolorous night are expressed by several words in Scripture. John describes him as saying four days before his passion, "Now is my soul troubled," as he marked the gathering clouds he hardly knew where to turn himself, and cried out "What shall I say?" Matthew writes of him, "he began to be sorrowful and very heavy." Upon the word *αδημονειν* translated "very heavy," Goodwin remarks that there was a distraction in the Saviour's agony since the root of the word signifies "separated from the people—men in distraction, being separated from mankind." What a thought, my brethren, that our blessed Lord should be driven to the very verge of distraction by the intensity of his anguish. Matthew represents the Saviour himself as saying "My soul is *exceeding sorrowful*, even unto death." Here the word Περιλυπός means encompassed, encircled, overwhelmed with grief. "He was plunged head and ears in sorrow and had no breathing-hole," is the strong expression of Goodwin. Sin leaves no cranny for comfort to enter, and therefore the sin-bearer must be entirely immersed in woe. Mark records that he began to be *sore amazed*, and to be very heavy. In this case *θαμβεισθαι*, with the prefix *εκ*, shows extremity of amazement like that of Moses when he did exceedingly fear and quake. O blessed Saviour, how can we bear to think of thee as a man astonished and alarmed! Yet was it even so when the terrors of God set themselves in array against thee. Luke uses the strong language of my text—"being in an agony." These expressions, each of them worthy to be the theme of a discourse, are quite sufficient to show that the grief of the Saviour was of the most extraordinary character; well justifying the prophetic exclamation "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which

was done unto me." He stands before us peerless in misery. None are molested by the powers of evil as he was; as if the powers of hell had given commandment to their legions, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king himself."

Should we profess to understand all the sources of our Lord's agony, wisdom would rebuke us with the question "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in search of the depths?" We cannot do more than look at the revealed causes of grief. It partly arose from the horror of his soul *when fully comprehending the meaning of sin.* Brethren, when you were first convinced of sin and saw it as a thing exceeding sinful, though your perception of its sinfulness was but faint compared with its real heinousness, yet horror took hold upon you. Do you remember those sleepless nights? Like the Psalmist, you said "My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." Some of us can remember when our souls chose strangling rather than life; when if the shadows of death could have covered us from the wrath of God we would have been too glad to sleep in the grave that we might not make our bed in hell. Our blessed Lord saw sin in its natural blackness. He had a most distinct perception of its treasonable assault upon his God, its murderous hatred to himself, and its destructive influence upon mankind. Well might horror take hold upon him, for a sight of sin must be far more hideous than a sight of hell, which is but its offspring.

Another deep fountain of grief was found in the fact that Christ now *assumed more fully his official position with regard to sin.* He was now made *sin.* Hear the word! he, who knew no sin, was made *sin* for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. In that night the words of Isaiah were fulfilled—"The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Now he stood as the sin-bearer, the substitute accepted by

Divine justice to bear that we might never bear the whole of wrath divine. At that hour heaven looked on him as standing in the sinner's stead, and treated as sinful man had richly deserved to be treated. Oh! dear friends, when the immaculate Lamb of God found himself in the place of the guilty, when he could not repudiate that place because he had voluntarily accepted it in order to save his chosen, what must his soul have felt, how must his perfect nature have been shocked at such close association with iniquity?

We believe that at this time, *our Lord had a very clear view of all the shame and suffering of his crucifixion.* The agony was but one of the first drops of the tremendous shower which discharged itself upon his head. He foresaw the speedy coming of the traitor-disciple, the seizure by the officers, the mock-trials before the Sanhedrim, and Pilate, and Herod, the scourging and buffeting, the crown of thorns, the shame, the spitting. All these rose up before his mind, and, as it is a general law of our nature that the foresight of trial is more grievous than trial itself, we can conceive how it was that he who answered not a word when in the midst of the conflict, could not restrain himself from strong crying and tears in the prospect of it. Beloved friends, if you can revive before your mind's eye the terrible incidents of his death, the hounding through the streets of Jerusalem, the nailing to the cross, the fever, the thirst, and, above all, the forsaking of his God, you cannot marvel that he began to be very heavy, and was sore amazed.

But possibly a yet more fruitful tree of bitterness was this—*that now his Father began to withdraw his presence from him.* The shadow of that great eclipse began to fall upon his spirit when he knelt in that cold midnight amidst the olives of Gethsemane. The sensible comforts which had cheered his spirit were taken away; that blessed application of promises which Christ Jesus needed as a man, was removed; all that we understand by the term "consolations of God" were hidden from his eyes. He was left single-handed in his weakness to

contend for the deliverance of man. The Lord stood by as if he were an indifferent spectator, or rather, as if he were an adversary; he wounded him "with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one."

But in our judgment the fiercest heat of the Saviour's suffering in the garden lay in *the temptations of Satan.* That hour above any time in his life, even beyond the forty days' conflict in the wilderness, was *the time of his temptation.* "This is your hour and the power of darkness." Now could he emphatically say, "The prince of this world cometh." This was his last hand-to-hand fight with all the hosts of hell, and here must he sweat great drops of blood before the victory can be achieved.

We have glanced at the fountains of the great deep which were broken up when the floods of grief deluged the Redeemer's soul. Brethren, this one lesson ere we pass from the contemplation. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Let us reflect that no suffering can be unknown to him. We do but run with footmen—he had to contend with horsemen; we do but wade up to our ankles in shallow streams of sorrow—he had to buffet with the swellings of Jordan. He will never fail to succour his people when tempted; even as it was said of old, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them."

II. Turn we next to contemplate THE TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD.

At the outset of his career, the serpent began to nibble at the heel of the promised deliverer; and now as the time approached when the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, that old dragon made a desperate attempt upon his great destroyer. It is not possible for us to lift the veil where revelation has per-

mitted it to fall, but we can form some faint idea of the suggestions with which Satan tempted our Lord. Let us, however, remark by way of caution, before we attempt to paint this picture, that whatever Satan may have suggested to our Lord, his perfect nature did not in any degree whatever submit to it so as to sin. The temptations were, doubtless, of the very foulest character, but they left no speck or flaw upon him, who remained still the fairest among ten thousand. The prince of this world came, but he had nothing in Christ. He struck the sparks, but they did not fall, as in our case, upon dry tinder; they fell as into the sea, and were quenched at once. He hurled the fiery arrows, but they could not even scar the flesh of Christ; they smote upon the buckler of his perfectly righteous nature, and they fell off with their points broken, to the discomfiture of the adversary.

But what, think you, were these temptations? It strikes me, from some hints given, that they were somewhat as follows—there was, first, *a temptation* to *leave the work unfinished;* we may gather this from the prayer—"If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." "Son of God," the tempter said, "is it so? Art thou really called to bear the sin of man? Hath God said, 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty,' and art thou he, the chosen of God, to bear all this load? Look at thy weakness! Thou sweatest, even now, great drops of blood; surely thou art not he whom the Father hath ordained to be mighty to save; or if thou be, what wilt thou win by it? What will it avail thee? Thou hast glory enough already. See what miscreants they are for whom thou art to offer up thyself a sacrifice. Thy best friends are asleep about thee when most thou needest their comfort; thy treasurer, Judas, is hastening to betray thee for the price of a common slave. The world for which thou sacrificest thyself will cast out thy name as evil, and thy Church, for which thou dost pay the ransom-price, what is it worth? A company of mortals! Thy divinity could create the like any

moment it pleaseth thee; why needest thou, then, pour out thy soul unto death?" Such arguments would Satan use; the hellish craft of one who had then been thousands of years tempting men, would know how to invent all manner of mischief. He would pour the hottest coals of hell upon the Saviour. It was in struggling with this temptation, among others, that, being in an agony, our Saviour prayed more earnestly.

Scripture implies that our Lord was assailed by *the fear that his strength would not be sufficient.* He was heard in that he feared. How, then, was he heard? An angel was sent unto him strengthening him. His fear, then, was probably produced by a sense of weakness. I imagine that the foul fiend would whisper in his ear—"Thou! thou endure to be smitten of God and abhorred of men! Reproach hath broken thy heart already; how wilt thou bear to be publicly put to shame and driven without the city as an unclean thing? How wilt thou bear to see thy weeping kinsfolk and thy broken-hearted mother standing at the foot of thy cross? Thy tender and sensitive spirit will quail under it. As for thy body, it is already emaciated; thy long fastings have brought thee very low; thou wilt become a prey to death long ere thy work is done. Thou wilt surely fail. God hath forsaken thee. Now will they persecute and take thee; they will give up thy soul to the lion, and thy darling to the power of the dog." Then would he picture all the sufferings of crucifixion, and say, "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the day when the Lord shall deal with thee?" The temptation of Satan was not directed against the Godhead, but the manhood of Christ, and therefore the fiend would probably dwell upon the feebleness of man. "Didst thou not say thyself, 'I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the despised of the people?" How wilt thou bear it when the wrath-clouds of God gather about thee? The tempest will surely shipwreck all thy hopes. It cannot be; thou canst not drink of this cup, nor be baptized with this baptism." In this

manner, we think, was our Master tried. But see, he yields not to it. Being in an agony, which word means in a wrestling, he struggles with the tempter like Jacob with the angel. "Nay," saith he, "I will not be subdued by taunts of my weakness; I am strong in the strength of my Godhead, I will overcome thee yet." Yet was the temptation so awful, that, in order to master it, his mental depression caused him to "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Possibly, also, the temptation may have arisen from a suggestion *that he was utterly forsaken.* I do not know—there may be sterner trials than this, but surely this is *one* of the worst, to be utterly forsaken. "See," said Satan, as he hissed it out between his teeth—"see, thou hast a friend nowhere! Look up to heaven, thy Father hath shut up the bowels of his compassion against thee. Not an angel in thy Father's courts will stretch out his hand to help thee. Look thou yonder, not one of those spirits who honoured thy birth will interfere to protect thy life. All heaven is false to thee; thou art left alone. And as for earth do not all men thirst for thy blood. Will not the Jew be gratified to see thy flesh torn with nails, and will not the Roman gloat himself when thou, the King of the Jews, art fastened to the cross? Thou hast no friend among the nations; the high and mighty scoff at thee, and the poor thrust out their tongues in derision. Thou hadst not where to lay thy head when thou wast in thy best estate; thou hast no place now where shelter will be given thee. See the companions with whom thou hast taken sweet counsel, what are they worth? Son of Mary, see there thy brother James, see there thy loved disciple John, and thy bold Apostle Peter—they sleep, they sleep; and yonder eight, how the cowards sleep when thou art in thy sufferings! And where are the four hundred others? They have forgotten thee; they will be at their farms and their merchandise by morning. Lo! thou hast no friend left in heaven or earth. All hell is against thee. I have stirred up mine infernal den. I have

sent my missives throughout all regions summoning every prince of darkness to set upon thee this night, and we will spare no arrows, we will use all our infernal might to overwhelm thee; and what wilt thou do, thou solitary one?" It may be, this was the temptation; I think it was, because the appearance of an angel unto him strengthening him removed that fear. He was heard in that he feared; he was no more alone, but heaven was with him. It may be that this is the reason of his coming three times to his disciples—as Hart puts it—

> "Backwards and forwards thrice he ran,
> As if he sought some help from man."

He would see for himself whether it was really true that all men had forsaken him; he found them all asleep; but perhaps he gained some faint comfort from the thought that they were sleeping, not from treachery, but from sorrow, the spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh was weak.

We think Satan also assaulted our Lord with a bitter taunt indeed. You know in what guise the tempter can dress it, and how bitterly sarcastic he can make the insinuation—"*Ah! thou wilt not be able to achieve the redemption of thy people.* Thy grand benevolence will prove a mockery, and thy beloved ones will perish. Thou shalt not prevail to save them from my grasp. Thy scattered sheep shall surely be my prey. Son of David, I am a match for thee; thou canst not deliver out of my hand. Many of thy chosen have entered heaven on the strength of thine atonement, but I will drag them thence, and quench the stars of glory; I will thin the courts of heaven of the choristers of God, for thou wilt not fulfil thy suretyship; thou canst not do it. Thou art not able to bring up all this great people; they will perish yet. See, are not the sheep scattered now that the Shepherd is smitten? They will all forget thee. Thou wilt never see of the travail of thy soul. Thy desired end will never be reached. Thou

wilt be for ever the man that began to build but was not able to finish." Perhaps this is more truly the reason why Christ went three times to look at his disciples. You have seen a mother; she is very faint, weary with a heavy sickness, but she labours under a sore dread that her child will die. She has started from her couch, upon which disease had thrown her, to snatch a moment's rest. She gazes anxiously upon her child. She marks the faintest sign of recovery. But she is sore sick herself, and cannot remain more than an instant from her own bed. She cannot sleep, she tosses painfully, for her thoughts wander; she rises to gaze again—"How art thou, my child, how art thou? Are those palpitations of thy heart less violent? Is thy pulse more gentle?" But, alas! she is faint, and she must go to her bed again, yet she can get no rest. She will return again and again to watch the loved one. So, methinks, Christ looked upon Peter, and James, and John, as much as to say, "No, they are not all lost yet; there are three left;" and, looking upon them as the type of all the Church, he seemed to say—"No, no; I will overcome; I will get the mastery; I will struggle even unto blood; I will pay the ransom-price, and deliver my darlings from their foe."

Now these, methinks, were his temptations. If you can form a fuller idea of what they were than this, then right happy shall I be. With this one lesson I leave the point—"*Pray that ye enter not into temptation.*" This is Christ's own expression; his own deduction from his trial. You have all read, dear friends, John Bunyan's picture of Christian fighting with Apollyon. That master-painter has sketched it to the very life. He says, though "this sore combat lasted for above half a day, even till Christian was almost quite spent, I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword; then, indeed, he did smile and look upward! But it was the dreadfullest sight I ever saw." That is the meaning of that prayer, "Lead us

not into temptation." Oh you that go recklessly where you are tempted, you that pray for afflictions—and I have known some silly enough to do that—you that put yourselves where you tempt the devil to tempt you, take heed from the Master's own example. He sweats great drops of blood when he is tempted. Oh pray God to spare you such a trial. Pray this morning and every day, "Lead me not into temptation."

III. Behold, dear brethren, THE BLOODY SWEAT.

We read, that "he sweat as it were great drops of blood." Hence a few writers have supposed that the sweat was not actually blood, but had the appearance of it. That interpretation, however, has been rejected by most commentators, from Augustine downward, and it is generally held that the words "as it were" do not only set forth *likeness* to blood, but signify that it was actually and literally blood. We find the same idiom used in the text—"We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." Now, clearly, this does not mean that Christ was like the only-begotten of the Father, since he is really so. So that generally this expression of Holy Scripture sets forth, not a mere likeness to a thing, but the very thing itself. We believe then, that Christ did really sweat blood. This phenomenon, though somewhat unusual, has been witnessed in other persons. There are several cases on record, some in the old medicine books of Galen, and others of more recent date, of persons who after long weakness, under fear of death have sweat blood. But this case is altogether one by itself for several reasons. If you will notice, he not only sweat blood, but it was in great drops; the blood coagulated, and formed large masses. I cannot better express what is meant than by the word "gouts"—big heavy drops. This has not been seen in any case. Some slight effusions of blood have been known in cases of persons who were previously enfeebled, but great drops never. When it is said "falling to the ground"—it shows their copiousness, so that they not only stood upon the surface and were

sucked up by his garments till he became like the red heifer which was slaughtered on that very spot, but the drops fell to the ground. Here he stands unrivalled. He was a man in good health, only about thirty years of age, and was labouring under no fear of death; but the mental pressure arising from his struggle with temptation, and the straining of all his strength, in order to baffle the temptation of Satan, so forced his frame to an unnatural excitement, that his pores sent forth great drops of blood which fell down to the ground. This proves how tremendous must have been the weight of sin when it was able so to crush the Saviour that he distilled drops of blood! This proves too, my brethren, the mighty power of his love. It is a very pretty observation of old Isaac Ambrose that the gum which exudes from the tree without cutting is always the best. This precious camphire-tree yielded most sweet spices when it was wounded under the knotty whips, and when it was pierced by the nails on the cross; but see, it giveth forth its best spice when there is no whip, no nail, no wound. This sets forth the voluntariness of Christ's sufferings, since without a lance the blood flowed freely. No need to put on the leech, or apply the knife; it flows spontaneously. No need for the rulers to cry "Spring up, O well;" of itself it flows in crimson torrents. Dearly beloved friends, if men suffer some frightful pain of mind—I am not acquainted with the medical matter—apparently the blood rushes to the heart. The cheeks are pale; a fainting fit comes on; the blood has gone inward, as if to nourish the inner man while passing through its trial. But see our Saviour in his agony; he is so utterly oblivious of self, that instead of his agony driving his blood to the heart to nourish himself, it drives it outward to bedew the earth. The agony of Christ, inasmuch as it pours him out upon the ground, pictures the fulness of the offering which he made for men.

Do you not perceive, my brethren, how intense must have been the wrestling through which he passed, and

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will you not hear its voice *to you?*—"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." It has been the lot of some of us to have sore temptations—else we did not know how to teach others—so sore that in wrestling against them the cold, clammy sweat has stood upon our brow. The place will never be forgotten by me—a lonely spot; where, musing upon my God, an awful rush of blasphemy went over my soul, till I would have preferred death to the trial; and I fell on my knees there and then, for the agony was awful, while my hand was at my mouth to keep the blasphemies from being spoken. Once let Satan be permitted really to try you with a temptation to blasphemy, and you will never forget it, though you live till your hairs are blanched; or let him attack you with some lust, and though you hate and loathe the very thought of it, and would lose your right arm sooner than indulge in it, yet it will come, and hunt, and persecute, and torment you. Wrestle against it even unto sweat, my brethren, yea, even unto blood. None of you should say, "I could not help it; I was tempted." Resist till you sweat blood rather than sin. Do not say, "I was so pressed with it; and it so suited my natural temperament, that I could not help falling into it." Look at the great Apostle and High Priest of your profession, and sweat even to blood rather than yield to the great tempter of your souls. Pray that ye enter not into temptation, so that when ye enter into it ye may with confidence say, "Lord, I did not seek this, therefore help me through with it, for thy name's sake."

IV. I want you, in the fourth place, to notice THE SAVIOUR'S PRAYER.

Dear friends, when we are tempted and desire to overcome, the best weapon is prayer. When you cannot use the sword and the shield, take to yourself the famous weapon of All-prayer. So your Saviour did. Let us notice his prayer. *It was lonely prayer.* He withdrew even from his three best friends about a stone's cast. Believer, especially in temptation, be much in solitary

prayer. As private prayer is the key to open heaven, so is it the key to shut the gates of hell. As it is a shield to prevent, so is it the sword with which to fight against temptation. Family-prayer, social prayer, prayer in the Church, will not suffice, these are very precious, but the best beaten spice will smoke in your censer in your private devotions, where no ear hears but God. Betake yourselves to solitude if you would overcome.

Mark, too, it was *humble prayer*. Luke says he knelt, but another evangelist says he fell on his face. What! does the King fall on his face? Where, then, must be thy place, thou humble servant of the great Master? Doth the Prince fall flat to the ground? Where, then, wilt thou lie? What dust and ashes shall cover thy head? What sackcloth shall gird thy loins? Humility gives us good foot-hold in prayer. There is no hope of any real prevalence with God, who casteth down the proud, unless we abase ourselves that he may exalt us in due time.

Further, it was *filial prayer*. Matthew describes him as saying "O my Father," and Mark puts it, "Abba, Father." You will find this always a stronghold in the day of trial to plead your adoption. Hence that prayer, in which it is written, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," begins with "Our Father which art in heaven." Plead as a child. You have no rights as a subject; you have forfeited them by your treason, but nothing can forfeit a child's right to a father's protection. Be not then ashamed to say, "My Father, hear my cry."

Again, observe that it was *persevering prayer*. He prayed three times, using the same words. Be not content until you prevail. Be as the importunate widow, whose continual coming earned what her first supplication could not win. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

Further, see how it glowed to a red-hot heat—*it was earnest prayer*. "He prayed more earnestly." What groans were those which were uttered by Christ! What

tears, which welled up from the deep fountains of his nature! Make earnest supplication if you would prevail against the adversary.

And last, *it was the prayer of resignation.* "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Yield, and God yields. Let it be as God wills, and God will will it that it shall be for the best. Be thou perfectly content to leave the result of thy prayer in his hands, who knows when to give, and how to give, and what to give, and what to withhold. So pleading, earnestly, importunately, yet mingling with it humility and resignation, thou shalt yet prevail.

Dear friends, we must conclude, turn to the last point with this as a practical lesson—"*Rise and pray.*" When the disciples were lying down they slept; sitting was the posture that was congenial to sleep. Rise; shake yourselves; stand up in the name of God; rise and pray. And if you are in temptation, be you more than ever you were in your life before, instant, passionate, importunate with God that he would deliver you in the day of your conflict.

V. As time has failed us we close with the last point, which is, THE SAVIOUR'S PREVALENCE.

The cloud has passed away. Christ has knelt, and the prayer is over. "But," says one, "did Christ prevail in prayer?" Beloved, could we have any hope that he would prevail in heaven if he had not prevailed on earth? Should we not have had a suspicion that if his strong crying and tears had not been heard *then*, he would fail *now*? His prayers did speed, and therefore he is a good intercessor for us. "How was he heard?" The answer shall be given very briefly indeed. He was heard, I think, in three respects. The first gracious answer that was given him was, *that his mind was suddenly rendered calm.* What a difference there is between "My soul is exceeding sorrowful,"—his hurrying to and fro, his repetition of the prayer three times, the singular agitation that was upon him—what a contrast between all these and his going forth to meet

the traitor with "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" Like a troubled sea before, and now as calm as when he himself said, "Peace be still," and the waves were quiet. You cannot know a profounder peace than that which reigned in the Saviour when before Pilate he answered him not a word. He is calm to the last, as calm as though it were his day of triumph rather than his day of trouble. Now I think this was vouchsafed to him in answer to his prayer. He had sufferings perhaps more intense, but his mind was now quieted so as to meet them with greater deliberation. Like some men, who when they first hear the firing of the shots in a battle are all trepidation, but as the fight grows hotter and they are in greater danger, they are cool and collected: they are wounded, they are bleeding, they are dying; yet are they quiet as a summer's eve; the first young flush of trouble is gone, and they can meet the foe with peace—so the Father heard the Saviour's cry, and breathed such a profound peace into his soul, that it was like a river, and his righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Next, we believe that he was answered *by God strengthening him through an angel.* How that was done we do not know. Probably it was by what the angel said, and equally likely is it that it was by what he did. The angel may have whispered the promises; pictured before his mind's eye the glory of his success; sketched his resurrection; pourtrayed the scene when his angels would bring his chariots from on high to bear him to his throne; revived before him the recollection of the time of his advent, the prospect when he should reign from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth; and so have made him strong. Or, perhaps, by some unknown method God sent such power to our Christ, who had been like Samson with his locks shorn, that he suddenly received all the might and majestic energy that were needed for the terrific struggle. Then he walked out of the garden no more a worm and no man, but made strong with an invisible might that

made him a match for all the armies that were round about him. A troop had overcome him, like Gad of old, but he overcame at last. Now he can dash through a troop; now he can leap over a wall. God has sent by his angel force from on high, and made the man Christ strong for battle and for victory.

And I think we may conclude with saying, that God heard him in granting him now, not simply strength, *but a real victory over Satan.* I do not know whether what Adam Clarke supposes is correct, that in the garden Christ did pay more of the price than he did even on the cross; but I am quite convinced that they are very foolish who get to such refinement that they think the atonement was made on the cross, and nowhere else at all. We believe that it was made in the garden as well as on the cross; and it strikes me that in the garden one part of Christ's work was finished, wholly finished, and that was his conflict with Satan. I conceive that Christ had now rather to bear the absence of his Father's presence and the revilings of the people and the sons of men, than the temptations of the devil. I do think that these were over when he rose from his knees in prayer, when he lifted himself from the ground where he marked his visage in the clay in drops of blood. The temptation of Satan was then over, and he might have said concerning that part of the work—"It is finished; broken is the dragon's head; I have overcome him." Perhaps in those few hours that Christ spent in the garden the whole energy of the agents of iniquity was concentrated and dissipated. Perhaps in that one conflict all that craft could invent, all that malice could devise, all that infernal practice could suggest, was tried on Christ, the devil having his chain loosened for that purpose, having Christ given up to him, as Job was, that he might touch him in his bones and in his flesh, yea, touch him in his heart and his soul, and vex him in his spirit. It may be that every devil in hell and every fiend of the pit was summoned, each to vent his own spite and to pour their

united energy and malice upon the head of Christ. And there he stood, and he could have said as he stood up to meet the next adversary—a devil in the form of man—Judas—"I come this day from Bozrah, with garments dyed red from Edom; I have trampled on my enemies, and overcome them once for all; now go I to bear man's sin and my Father's wrath, and to finish the work which he has given me to do." If this be so, Christ was then heard in that he feared; he feared the temptation of Satan, and he was delivered from it; he feared his own weakness, and he was strengthened; he feared his own trepidation of mind, and he was made calm.

What shall we say, then, in conclusion, but this lesson. Does it not say "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall have." Then if your temptations reach the most tremendous height and force, still lay hold of God in prayer and you shall prevail. Convinced sinner! that is a comfort for you. Troubled saint! that is a joy for you. To one and all of us is this lesson of this morning—"Pray that ye enter not into temptation." If in temptation let us ask that Christ may pray for us that our faith fail not, and when we have passed through the trouble let us try to strengthen our brethren, even as Christ has strengthened us this day."

THE WARRANT OF FAITH.

"And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ."—1 JOHN iii. 23.

THE old law shines in terrible glory with its ten commandments. There are some who love that law so much, that they cannot pass over a Sabbath without its being read in their hearing, accompanied by the mournful petition, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law." Nay, some are so foolish as to enter into a covenant for their children, that "they shall keep all God's holy commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life." Thus they early wear a yoke which neither they nor their fathers can bear, and daily groaning under its awful weight, they labour after righteousness where it never can be found. Over the tables of the law in every Church, I would have conspicuously printed these gospel words, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." The true believer has learned to look away from the killing ordinances of the old law. He understands that "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written: Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." He therefore turns with loathing from all trust in his own obedience to the ten commands, and lays hold with joy upon the hope set before him in the one commandment contained in my text, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ."

We sing, and sing rightly too—

Delivered on Sunday morning, September 20, 1863, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

"My soul, no more attempt to draw
Thy life and comfort from the law,"

for from the law death cometh and not life, misery and not comfort. "To convince and to condemn is all the law can do." Oh, when will all professors, and especially all professed ministers of Christ, learn the difference between the law and the gospel? Most of them make a mingle-mangle, and serve out deadly potions to the people, often containing but one ounce of gospel to a pound of law, whereas, but even a grain of law is enough to spoil the whole thing. It must be gospel, and gospel only. "If it be of grace, it is not of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if it be of works, then it is not of grace, otherwise work is no more work."

The Christian then, turning his attention to the one command of the gospel, is very anxious to know first, *what is the matter of the believing here intended;* and secondly, *what is the sinner's warrant for so believing in Christ;* nor will he fail to consider *the mandate of the gospel.*

I. First then, THE MATTER OF BELIEVING, or what is it that a man is to believe in order to eternal life. Is it the Athanasian creed? Is it true, that if a man does not hold that confession whole and entire, he shall without doubt perish everlastingly? We leave those to decide who are learned in matters of bigotry. Is it any particular form of doctrine? Is it the Calvinistic or the Arminian scheme? For our own part we are quite content with our text—believing on "his Son Jesus Christ." That faith which saves the soul is believing on a person, depending upon Jesus for eternal life.

To speak more at large of the things which are to be believed in order to justification by faith, they all relate to the person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must believe him to be God's Son—so the text puts it—"His Son." We must grasp with strong confidence the great fact that he is God: for nothing short of a divine Saviour can ever deliver us from the infinite

wrath of God. He who rejects the true and proper Godhead of Jesus of Nazareth, is not saved, and cannot be, for he believes not on Jesus as God's Son. Furthermore, we must accept this Son of God as "Jesus," the Saviour. We must believe that Jesus Christ the Son of God, became man out of infinite love to man, that he might save his people from their sins, according to that worthy saying, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief. We must look upon Jesus as "Christ," the anointed of the Father, sent into this world on salvation's errand, not that sinners might save themselves, but that he, being mighty to save, might bring many sons unto glory. We must believe that Jesus Christ, coming into the world to save sinners, did really effect his mission; that the precious blood which is shed upon Calvary is almighty to atone for sin, and therefore, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, since the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. We must heartily accept the great doctrine of the atonement—regarding Jesus as standing in the room, place, and stead of sinful men, bearing for them the terror of the law's curse until justice was satisfied and could demand no more. Moreover, we should rejoice that as Jesus Christ, by his dying, put away for ever the sin of his people, so by his living he gave unto those who trust in him a perfect righteousness, in which, despite their own sins, they are "accepted in the beloved." We are also, taught, that if we heartily trust our souls with Christ, our sins, through his blood, are forgiven and his righteousness is imputed to us. The mere knowledge of these facts will not, however, save us, unless we really and truly trust our souls in the Redeemer's hands. Faith must act in this wise: "I believe that Jesus came to save sinners, and therefore, sinner though I be, I rest myself on him; I know that his righteousness justifies the ungodly; I, therefore, though ungodly trust in him to be my righteousness; I know that his precious blood in heaven prevails with God on the behalf

of them that come unto him; and since I come unto him, I know by faith that I have an interest in his perpetual intercession."

Now, I have enlarged the one thought of believing on God's Son Jesus Christ. Brethren, I would not darken counsel by words without knowledge. "Believing" is most clearly explained by that simple word "trust." Believing is partly the intellectual operation of receiving divine truths, but the essence of it lies in relying upon those truths. I believe that, although I cannot swim, yonder friendly plank will support me in the flood—I grasp it, and am saved: the grasp is faith. I am promised by a generous friend that if I draw upon his banker, he will supply all my needs—I joyously confide in him, and as often as I am in want I go to the bank, and am enriched: my going to the bank is faith. Thus faith is accepting God's great promise, contained in the person of his Son. It is taking God at his word, and trusting in Jesus Christ as being my salvation, although I am utterly unworthy of his regard. Sinner, if thou takest Christ to be thy Saviour this day, thou art justified; though thou be the biggest blasphemer and persecutor out of hell, if thou darest to trust Christ with thy salvation, that faith of thine saves thee; though thy whole life may have been as black, and foul, and devilish as thou couldst have made it, yet if thou wilt honour God by believing Christ is able to forgive such a wretch as thou art, and wilt now trust in Jesus' precious blood, thou art saved from divine wrath.

II. The WARRANT OF BELIEVING is the point upon which I shall spend my time and strength this morning. According to my text, the warrant for a man to believe is the *commandment* of God. This is the commandment, that ye "believe on his Son Jesus Christ."

Self-righteousness will always find a lodging somewhere or other. Drive it, my brethren, out of the ground of our confidence; let the sinner see that he cannot rest on his good works, then, as foxes will have holes, this self-righteousness will find a refuge for itself in the

warrant of our faith in Christ. It reasons thus: "You are not saved by what you do but by what Christ did; but then, you have no right to trust in Christ unless there is something good in you which shall entitle you to trust in him." Now, this legal reasoning I oppose. I believe such teaching to contain in it the essence of Popish self-righteousness. The warrant for a sinner to believe in Christ is not in himself in any sense or in any manner, but in the fact that he is commanded there and then to believe on Jesus Christ. Some preachers in the Puritanic times, whose shoe latchets I am not worthy to unloose, erred much in this matter. I refer not merely to Alleyne and Baxter, who are far better preachers of the law than of the gospel, but I include men far sounder in the faith than they, such as Rogers of Dedham, Shepherd, the author of "The Sound Believer," and especially the American, Thomas Hooker, who has written a book upon qualifications for coming to Christ. These excellent men had a fear of preaching the gospel to any except those whom they styled "sensible sinners," and consequently kept hundreds of their hearers sitting in darkness when they might have rejoiced in the light. They preached repentance and hatred of sin as the warrant of a sinner's trusting to Christ. According to them, a sinner might reason thus—"I possess such-and-such a degree of sensibility on account of sin, therefore I have a right to trust in Christ." Now, I venture to affirm that such reasoning is seasoned with fatal error. Whoever preaches in this fashion may preach much of the gospel, but the whole gospel of the free grace of God in its fulness he has yet to learn. In our own day certain preachers assure us that a man must be regenerated before we may bid him believe in Jesus Christ; some degree of a work of grace in the heart being, in their judgment, the only warrant to believe. This also is false. It takes away a gospel for sinners and offers us a gospel for saints. It is anything but a ministry of free grace.

Others say that the warrant for a sinner to believe

in Christ is his election. Now, as his election cannot possibly be known by any man until he has believed, this is virtually preaching that nobody has any known warrant for believing at all. If I cannot possibly know my election before I believe—and yet the minister tells me that I may only believe upon the ground of my election—how am I ever to believe at all? Election brings me faith, and faith is the evidence of my election; but to say that my faith is to depend upon my knowledge of my election, which I cannot get without faith, is to talk egregious nonsense.

I lay down this morning with great boldness—because I know and am well persuaded that what I speak is the mind of the Spirit—this doctrine that the sole and only warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus is found in the gospel itself and in the command which accompanies that gospel, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." I shall deal with that matter first of all, *negatively*, and then, *positively*.

1. First, NEGATIVELY; and here my first observation is that any other way of preaching the gospel-warrant is *absurd*. If I am to preach faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already, being regenerate. But you will tell me that I ought to preach it only to those who repent of their sins. Very well; but since true repentance of sin is the work of the Spirit, any man who has repentance is most certainly saved, because evangelical repentance never can exist in an unrenewed soul. Where there is repentance there is faith already, for they never can be separated. So, then, I am only to preach faith to those who have it. Absurd, indeed! Is not this waiting till the man is cured and then bringing him the medicine? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and not to sinners. "Nay," saith one, "but we mean that a man must have some good desires towards Christ before he has any

warrant to believe in Jesus." Friend, do you not know that all good desires have some degree of holiness in them? But if a sinner hath any degree of true holiness in him it must be the work of the Spirit, for true holiness never exists in the carnal mind, therefore, that man is already renewed, and therefore saved. Are we to go running up and down the world, proclaiming life to the living, casting bread to those who are fed already, and holding up Christ on the pole of the gospel to those who are already healed? My brethren, where is our inducement to labour where our efforts are so little needed? If I am to preach Christ to those who have no goodness, who have nothing in them that qualifies them for mercy, then I feel I have a gospel so divine that I would proclaim it with my last breath, crying aloud, that "Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*"—sinners as sinners, not as penitent sinners or as awakened sinners, but sinners as sinners, sinners "of whom I am chief."

Secondly, to tell the sinner that he is to believe on Christ because of some warrant in himself, is *legal*, I dare to say it—legal. Though this method is generally adopted by the higher school of Calvinists, they are herein unsound, uncalvinistic, and legal; it is strange that they who are so bold defenders of free grace should make common cause with Baxterians and Pelagians. I lay it down to be legal for this reason: if I believe in Jesus Christ because I feel a genuine repentance of sin, and therefore have a warrant for my faith, do you not perceive that the first and true ground of my confidence is the fact that I have repented of sin? If I believe in Jesus because I have convictions and a spirit of prayer, then evidently the first and the most important fact is not Christ, but my possession of repentance conviction, and prayer, so that really my hope hinges upon my having repented; and if this be not legal I do not know what is. Put it lower. My opponents will say, "The sinner must have an awakened conscience before he is warranted to believe on Christ." Well

then, if I trust Christ to save me because I have an awakened conscience, I say again, the most important part of the whole transaction is the alarm of my conscience, and my real trust hangs there. If I lean on Christ because I feel this and that, then I am leaning on my feelings and not on Christ alone, and this is legal indeed. Nay, even if desires after Christ are to be my warrant for believing, if I am to believe in Jesus not because he bids me, but because I feel some desires after him, you will again with half an eye perceive that the most important source of my comfort must be my own desires. So that we shall be always looking within. "Do I really desire? If I do, then Christ can save me; if I do not, then he cannot." And so my desire overrides Christ and his grace. Away with such legality from the earth!

Again, any other way of preaching than that of bidding the sinner believe because God commands him to believe, is a *boasting* way of faith. For if my warrant to trust in Jesus be found in my experience, my loathings of sin, or my longings after Christ, then all these good things of mine are a legitimate ground of boasting, because though Christ may save me, yet these were the wedding-dress which fitted me to come to Christ. If these be indispensable pre-requisites and conditions, then the man who has them may truly and justly say, "Christ did save me, but I had the pre-requisites and conditions first, and therefore let these share the praise." See, my brethren, those who have a faith which rests upon their own experience, what are they as a rule? Mark them, and you will perceive much censorious bitterness in them, prompting them to set up their own experience as the standard of saintship, which may assuredly make us suspicious whether they ever were humbled in a gospel manner at all, so as to see that their own best feelings, and best repentances, and best experiences in themselves are nothing more nor less than filthy rags in the sight of God. My dear brethren, when we tell a sinner that foul and filthy as he is, without

any preparation or qualification, he is to take Jesus Christ to be his all in all, finding in him all that he can ever need, when we dare on the spot to bid the jailor just startled out of sleep, "Believe in Jesus," we leave no room for self-glorification, all must be of grace. When we find the lame man lying at the temple gates, we do not bid him strengthen his own legs, or feel some life in them, but we bid him in the name of Jesus rise up and walk; surely here when God the Spirit owns the Word, all boasting is excluded. Whether I rely on my experience or my good works makes little difference, for either of these reliances will lead to boasting since they are both legal. Law and boasting are twin brothers, but free grace and gratitude always go together.

Any other warrant for believing on Jesus than that which is presented in the gospel is *changeable*. See, brethren, if my warrant to believe in Christ lies in my meltings of heart and my experiences, then if to-day I have a melting heart and I can pour my soul out before the Lord, I have a warrant to believe in Christ. But to-morrow (who does not know this?) to-morrow my heart may be as hard as a stone, so that I can neither feel nor pray. Then, according to the qualification-theory, I have no right to trust in Christ, my warrant is clean gone from me. According to the doctrine of final perseverance, the Christian's faith is continual, it so the warrant of his faith must be always the same or else he has sometimes an unwarranted faith which is absurd; it follows from this that the abiding warrant of faith must lie in some immutable truth. Since everything within changes more frequently than ever does an English sky, if my warrant to believe in Christ be based within, it must change every hour; consequently I am lost and saved alternately. Brethren, can these things be so? For my part I want a sure and immutable warrant for my faith; I want a warrant to believe in Jesus which will serve me when the devil's blasphemy comes pouring into my ears like a flood; I want a warrant to believe which will serve me when my lusting

and corruptions appear in terrible array, and make me cry out, "O wretched man that I am." I want a warrant to believe in Christ which will comfort me when I have no good frames and holy feelings, when I am dead as a stone and my spirit lies cleaving to the dust. Such an unfailing warrant to belief in Jesus is found in this precious truth, that his gracious commandment and not my variable experience, is my title to believe on his Son Jesus Christ.

Again, my brethren, any other warrant is utterly *incomprehensible*. Multitudes of my brethren preach an impossible salvation. How often do poor sinners hunger and thirst to know the way of salvation, and there is no available salvation preached to them. Personally, I do not remember to have been told from the pulpit to believe in Jesus as a sinner. I heard much of feelings which I thought I could never get, and frames after which I longed; but I found no peace until a true, free grace message came to me, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." See, my brethren, if convictions of soul are necessary qualifications for Christ, we ought to know to an ounce how much of these qualifications are needed. If you tell a poor sinner that there is a certain amount of humblings, and tremblings, and convictions, and heart-searchings to be felt, in order that he may be warranted to come to Christ, I demand of all legal-gospellers distinct information as to the manner and exact degree of preparation required. Brethren, you will find when these gentlemen are pushed into a corner, they will not agree, but will every one give a different standard, according to his own judgment. One will say the sinner must have months of law work; another, that he only needs good desires; and some will demand that he possess the graces of the Spirit—such as humility, godly sorrow, and love to holiness. You will get no clear answer from them. If the sinner's warrant to come is found in the gospel itself, the matter is clear and plain; but what a roundabout plan is that compound of law and gospel

against which I contend! And let me ask you, my brethren, whether such an incomprehensible gospel would do for a dying man? There he lies in the agonies of death. He tells me that he has no good thought or feeling, and asks what he must do to be saved. There is but a step between him and death—another five minutes and that man's soul may be in hell. What am I to tell him? Am I to be an hour explaining to him the preparation required before he may come to Christ? Brethren, I dare not. But I tell him, "Believe, brother, even though it be the eleventh hour; trust thy soul with Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." There is the same gospel for a living man as for a dying man. The thief on the cross may have had some experience, but I do not find him pleading it; he turns his eye to Jesus, saying, "Lord remember me!" How prompt is the reply, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He may have had longing desires, he may have had deep convictions, but I am quite sure he did not say, "Lord, I dare not ask thee to remember me, because I do not feel I have repented enough. I dare not trust thee, because I have not been shaken over hell's mouth." No, no, no; he looked to Jesus as he was, and Jesus responded to his believing prayer. It must be so with you, my brethren, for any other plan but that of a sinner's coming to Christ *as a sinner*, and resting on Jesus just as he is, is utterly incomprehensible; or, if it is to be explained at all, will require a day or two to explain it in; and that cannot be the gospel which the apostles preached to dying men.

Yet again, I believe that the preaching of alarms of conscience and repentance as qualifications for Christ is *unacceptable* to the awakened sinner. I will introduce one, as Saltmarsh does in his "Flowings of Christ's Blood Freely to the Chief of Sinners." Here is a poor brother who dares not believe in Jesus. I will suppose him to have attended a ministry where the preaching is "If you have felt this, if you have felt that, then you may believe." When you went to your minister

in trouble, what did he say to you? "He asked me whether I felt my need of Christ, I told him I did not think I did, at least I did not feel my need enough. He told me that I ought to meditate upon the guilt of sin, and consider the dreadful character of the wrath to come, and I might in this way feel my need more." Did you do so? "I did; but it seemed to me as if while I meditated upon the terrors of judgment, my heart grew harder instead of softer, and I seemed to be desperately set, and resolved in a kind of despair to go on in my ways; yet, sometimes I did have some humblings and some meltings of heart." What did your minister tell you to do to get comfort then? "He said I ought to pray much." Did you pray? "I told him I could not pray; that I was such a sinner that it was of no use for me to hope for an answer if I could." What did he say then? "He told me I ought to lay hold upon the promises." Yes, did you do so? "No; I told him I could not lay hold upon the promises; that I could not see they were meant for me, for I was not the character intended; and that I could only find threatenings in the Word of God for such as I was." What did he say then? "He told me to be diligent in the use of the means, and to attend his ministry." What did you say to that? "I told him I was diligent, but that what I wanted was not means, I wanted to get my sins pardoned and forgiven." What did he say then? "Why, he said that I had better persevere and wait patiently for the Lord; I told him that I was in such a horror of great darkness, that my soul chose strangling rather than life. Well then, he said, he thought I must already be truly penitent, and was therefore safe, and that sooner or later I should have hope. But I told him, a mere hope was not enough for me, I could not be safe while sin lay so heavy upon me. He asked me whether I had not desires after Christ. I said I had, but they were merely selfish, carnal desires; that I sometimes thought I had desires, but they were only legal. He said if I had a desire to have a desire,

it was God's work, and I was saved. That did prop me up for a time, sir, but I went down again, for that did not do for me, I wanted something solid to rest on." And, sinner, how is it now with you? where are you now? "Well, sir, I scarce know where I am, but I pray you, tell me what I must do?" Brethren, my reply is prompt and plain; hear it. Poor soul, I have no questions to ask you; I have no advice to give you, except this, God's command to you is, whatever you may be, trust to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Will you do it or no? If he rejects that, I must leave him; I have no more to say to him; I am clear of his blood, and on him the sentence comes, "He that believeth not shall be damned." But you will find in ninety-nine cases out of one hundred, that when you begin to talk to the sinner, not about his repentings and his desirings, but about Christ, and tell him that he need not fear the law, for Christ has satisfied it; that he need not fear an angry God, for God is not angry with believers; tell him that all manner of iniquity was cast into the Red Sea of Jesus' blood, and, like the Egyptians, drowned there for ever; tell him that no matter however vile and wicked he may have been "Christ is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him;" and tell him that he has a right to come, be he who he may, or what he may because God bids him come; and you will find that the suitability of such a gospel to the sinner's case, will prove a sweet inducement in the hand of the Holy Spirit, to lead that sinner to lay hold on Jesus Christ. O my brethren, I am ashamed of myself when I think of the way in which I have sometimes talked to awakened sinners. I am persuaded that the only true remedy for a broken heart is Jesus Christ's most precious blood. Some surgeons keep a wound open too long; they keep cutting, and cutting, and cutting, till they cut away as much sound flesh as proud flesh. Better by half heal it, heal it at once, for Jesus Christ was not sent to keep open the wounds, but to bind up the broken i

heart. To you, then, sinners of every sort and hue, black, hard-hearted, insensible, impenitent, even to you is the gospel sent, for "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," even the chief.

I might here pause, surely, but I must add yet one other point upon this negative mode of reasoning. Any other warrant for the sinner's faith than the gospel itself, is *false* and *dangerous*.

It is *false*, my brethren, it is as false as God is true, that anything in a sinner can be his warrant for believing in Jesus. The whole tenour and run of the gospel is clean contrary to it. It must be false, because there is nothing in a sinner until he believes which can be a warrant for his believing. If you tell me that a sinner has any good thing in him before he believes, I reply, impossible—"Without faith it is impossible to please God." All the repentings, and humblings, and convictions that a sinner has before faith, must be, according to Scripture, displeasing to God. Do not tell me that his heart is broken; if it is only broken by carnal means, and trusts in its brokenness, it needs to be broken over again. Do not tell me he has been led to hate his sin; I tell you he does not hate his sin, he only hates hell. There cannot be a true and real hatred of sin where there is not faith in Jesus. All the sinner knows and feels before faith is only an addition to his other sins, and how can sin which deserves wrath be a warrant for an act which is the work of the Holy Spirit?

How *dangerous* is the sentiment I am opposing. My hearers, it may be so mischievous as to have misled some of you. I solemnly warn you, though you have been professors of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for twenty years, if your reason for believing in Christ lies in this, that you have felt the terrors of the law; that you have been alarmed, and have been convinced; if your own experience be your warrant for believing in Christ, it is a false reason, and you are really relying upon your experience and not upon Christ: and mark you, if you rely upon your frames and feelings, nay, if

you rely upon your communion with Christ, in any degree whatever, you are as certainly a lost sinner as though you relied upon oaths and blasphemies; you shall no more be able to enter heaven, even by the works of the Spirit—and this is using strong language—than by your own works; for Christ, and Christ alone, is the foundation, and "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Take care of resting in your own experience. All that is of nature's spinning must be unravelled, and everything that getteth into Christ's place, however dear to thee, and however precious in itself, must be broken in pieces, and like the dust of the golden calf, must be strawed upon the water and thou wilt be made sorrowfully to drink of it, because thou madest it thy trust. I believe that the tendency of that preaching which puts the warrant for faith anywhere but in the gospel command, is to vex the true penitent, and to console the hypocrite; the tendency of it is to make the poor soul which really repents, feel that he must not believe in Christ, because he sees so much of his own hardness of heart. The more spiritual a man is, the more unspiritual he sees himself to be and the more penitent a man is, the more impenitent he discovers himself to be. Often the most penitent men are those who think themselves the most impenitent; and if I am to preach the gospel to the penitent and not to every sinner, as a sinner, then those penitent persons, who, according to my opponents, have the most right to believe, are the very persons who will never dare to touch it, because they are conscious of their own impenitence and want of all qualification for Christ. Sinners, let me address you with words of life. Jesus wants nothing of you, nothing whatsoever, nothing done, nothing felt; he gives both work and feeling. Ragged, penniless, just as ye are, lost, forsaken, desolate with no good feelings, and no good hopes, still Jesus comes to you, and in these words of pity he addresses you. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. If thou believest in him thou shalt never be confounded

2. But now, POSITIVELY, and as the negative part has been positive enough, we will be brief here. The gospel command is a sufficient warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus Christ. The *words of our text* imply this—"This is the commandment." My brethren, do you want any warrant for doing a thing better than God's command to do it? The children of Israel borrowed jewels of silver and jewels of gold from the Egyptians. Many, as they read the Bible, find fault with this transaction; but, to my mind, if God bade them do it, that was enough of justification for them. Very well; if God bid thee believe—if this be his commandment that thou believe—canst thou want a better warrant? I say, is there any necessity for any other? Surely the Lord's Word is enough.

Brethren, the command to believe in Christ must be the sinner's warrant, if you consider the nature of our commission. How runs it? "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." It ought to run, according to the other plan, "preach the gospel to every regenerate person, to every convinced sinner, to every sensible soul." But it is not so; it is to "every creature." But unless the warrant be a something in which every creature can take a share, there is no such thing as consistently preaching it to *every creature.* Then how is it put?—"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Where is there a word about the pre-requisites for believing? Surely the man could not be damned for not doing what he would not have been warranted in doing. Our preaching, on the theory of qualifications, should not be, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" but "Qualify yourselves for faith, be sensible of your sin, be regenerated, get marks and evidences, and then believe." Why, surely, if I am not to sow the good seed on the stony places and among the thorns, I had better give up being a sower, and take to ploughing, or some other work. When the apostles went to Macedonia or Achaia, they

ought not to have commenced with preaching Christ; they should have preached up qualifications, emotions, and sensations, if these are the preparations for Jesus; but I find that Paul, whenever he stands up, has nothing to preach but "Christ, and him crucified." Repentance is preached as a gift from the exalted Saviour, but it is never as the cause or preparation for believing on Jesus. These two graces are born together, and live with a common life—beware of making one a foundation for the other. I would like to carry one of those who only preach to sensible sinners, and set him down in the capital of the kingdom of Dahomey. There are no sensible sinners there! Look at them, with their mouths stained with human blood, with their bodies smeared all over with the gore of their immolated victims—how will the preacher find any qualification there? I know not what he could say, but I know what my message would be. My word would run thus—"Men and brethren, God, who made the heavens and the earth, hath sent his Son Jesus Christ into the world to suffer for our sins, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." If Christ crucified did not shake the kingdom of Dahomey, it would be its first failure. When the Moravian missionaries first went to Greenland, you remember that they were months and months teaching the poor Greenlander about the Godhead, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the doctrine of sin and the law, and no converts were forthcoming. But one day, by accident, one of the Greenlanders happening to read that passage, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God," asked the meaning, and the missionary, hardly thinking him advanced enough to understand the gospel, nevertheless ventured to explain it to him, and the man became converted, and hundreds of his countrymen received the Word. Naturally enough, they said to the missionaries, "Why did not you tell us this before? We knew all about there being a God, and that did us no good; why did

not you come and tell us to believe in Jesus Christ before?" O my brethren, this is God's weapon, God's method; this is the great battering-ram which will shake the gates of hell; and we must see to it, that it be brought into daily use.

I have tried, on the positive side, to show that a free-grace warrant is consistent with the text—that it accords with apostolic custom, and is, indeed, absolutely necessary, seeing the condition in which sinners are placed. But, my brethren, to preach Christ to sinners, as sinners, must be right; for all the former acts of God are to sinners, as sinners. Whom did God elect? Sinners. He loved us with a great love, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. How did he redeem them? Did he redeem them as saints? No; for while we were yet enemies, he reconciled us unto God by the death of his Son. Christ never shed his blood for the good that is in us, but for the sin that is in us. "He laid down his life for our sins," says the apostle. If, then, in election and redemption, we find God dealing with sinners, as sinners, it is a marring and nullifying of the whole plan if the gospel is to be preached to men as anything else but sinners.

Again, it is inconsistent with the character of God to suppose that he comes forth and proclaims, "If, O my fallen creatures, if you qualify yourselves for my mercy, I will save you; if you will feel holy emotions —if you will be conscious of sacred desires after me, then the blood of Jesus Christ shall cleanse you." There would be little which is godlike in that. But when he comes out with pardons full and free, and saith, "Yea, when ye lay in your blood, I said unto you Live"—when he comes to you, his enemy and rebellious subject, and yet cries, "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities"—why, this is divine. You know what David said, "I have sinned." What did Nathan say? "The Lord has put away thy sin, thou shalt not die," and that is the message of the gospel to a sinner as a sinner. "The Lord has put away thy sin; Christ has suffered; he has brought

in perfect righteousness; take him, trust him, and ye shall live." May that message come home to you this morning, my beloved.

I have read with some degree of attention a book to which I owe much for this present discourse—a book, by Abraham Booth, called "Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners." I have never heard any one cast a suspicion upon Abraham Booth's soundness; on the contrary, he has been generally considered as one of the most orthodox of the divines of the last generation. If you want my views in full, read his book. If you need something more, let me say, among all the bad things which his revilers have laid to his door, I have never heard any one blame William Huntingdon for not being high enough in doctrine. Now, William Huntingdon prefaced in his lifetime a book by Saltmarsh, with which he was greatly pleased; and the marrow of its teaching is just this, in his own words, "The only ground for any to believe is, he is faithful that hath promised, not anything in themselves, for this is the commandment, That ye believe on his Son Jesus Christ." Now, if William Huntingdon himself printed such a book as that, I marvel how the followers of either William Huntingdon or Abraham Booth, how men calling themselves Calvinistic divines and high Calvinists, can advocate what is not free grace but a legal, graceless system of qualifications and preparations. I might here quote Crisp, who is pat to the point and a high doctrine man too. I mention neither Booth nor Huntingdon as authorities upon the subject to the law and to the testimony we must go; but I do mention them to show that men holding strong views on election and predestination yet did see it to be consistent to preach the gospel to sinners as sinners—nay, felt that it was inconsistent to preach the gospel in any other way.

I shall only add, that the blessings which flow from preaching Christ to sinners as sinners, are of such a character as prove it to be right. Do you not see that this *levels us all?* We have the same warrant for believing, and no one can exalt himself above his fellow.

Then, my brethren, how it inspires men with hope and confidence; *it forbids despair.* No man can despair if this be true; or if he do, it is a wicked, unreasonable despair, because if he has been never so bad, yet God commands him to believe. What room can there be for despondency? Surely if anything could cut off Giant Despair's head, Christ preached to sinners is the sharp two-edged sword to do it.

Again, how it *makes a man live close to Christ!* If I am to come to Christ as a sinner every day, and I must do so, for the Word saith, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him;" if every day I am to come to Christ as a sinner, why then, how paltry all my doings look! what utter contempt it casts upon all my fine virtues, my preachings, my prayings, and all that comes of my flesh! and though it leads me to seek after purity and holiness, yet it teaches me to live on Christ and not on them, and so it keeps me at the fountain head.

My time flies, and I must leave the last head, just to add, sinner, whoever thou mayst be, God now commands thee to believe in Jesus Christ. This is his commandment: he does not command thee to feel anything, or be anything, to prepare thyself for this. Now, art thou willing to incur the great guilt of making God a liar? Surely thou wilt shrink from that: then dare to believe. Thou canst not say, "I have no right:" you have a perfect right to do what God tells you to do. You cannot tell me you are not fit; there is no fitness wanted, the command is given and it is yours to obey, not to dispute. You cannot say it does not come to you—it is preached to every creature under heaven; and now soul, it is so pleasant a thing to trust the Lord Jesus Christ that I would fain persuade myself thou needest no persuading. It is so delightful a thing to accept a perfect salvation, to be saved by precious blood, and to be married to so bright a Saviour, that I would fain hope the Holy Spirit has led thee to cry, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

PAUL—HIS CLOAK AND HIS BOOKS.

"The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments."—2 TIMOTHY iv. 13.

FOOLISH persons have made remarks upon the trifles of Scripture. They have marvelled why so little a matter as a cloak should be mentioned in an inspired book; but they ought to know that this is one of the many indications that the book is by the same author as the book of nature. Are there not things which our short-sightedness would call trifles in the volume of creation around us? What is the peculiar value of the daisy upon the lawn, or the buttercup in the meadow? Compared with the rolling sea, or the eternal hills, how inconsiderable they seem! Why has the humming bird a plumage so wondrously bejewelled, and why is so much marvellous skill expended upon the wing of a butterfly? Why such curious machinery in the foot of a fly, or such a matchless optical arrangement in the eye of a spider? Because to most men these are trifles, are they to be left out of nature's plans? No; because greatness of divine skill is as apparent in the minute as in the magnificent; and even so in Holy Writ, the little things which are embalmed in the amber of inspiration are far from inappropriate or unwise. Besides, in providence are there not trifles? It is not every day that a nation is rent by revolution, or a throne shaken by rebellion: far oftener a bird's-nest is destroyed by a child, or an ant-hill overturned by a spade. It is not at every hour that a torrent inundates a province, but how frequently do the dewdrops moisten the green leaves? We do not

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often read of hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes, but the annals of providence could reveal the history of many a grain of dust borne along in the summer's gale, many a sear leaf rent from the poplar, and many a rush waving by the river's brim. Hence learn to see in the littles of the Bible, the God of providence and nature. Observe two pictures, and you will, if thoroughly skilled in art, detect certain minute details, which indicate the same authorship if they are by the same hand; the very littlenesses often, to men of artistic eye, will betray the painter more certainly than the more prominent strokes, which might far more easily be counterfeited. Experts detect a handwriting by a slight quivering in the upstrokes, the turn of the final mark, a dot, a cross, or less matters still. Can we not see the legible handwriting of the God of nature and providence, in the very fact that the sublimities of revelation are interspersed with homely, every-day remarks? But they are not trifles, after all. I venture to say, that my text has much in it of spiritual instruction. I trust that *this cloak* may warm your hearts this morning, that *these books* may give you instruction, and that *the apostle* himself, may be to you an example of heroism, fitted to stir your minds to imitation.

I. First, let us LOOK AT THIS MEMORABLE CLOAK which Paul left with Carpus at Troas. Troas was a principal seaport-town of Asia Minor. Very likely the apostle Paul was seized at Troas on the second occasion of his being taken before the Roman emperor. The soldiers usually appropriated to themselves any extra garment in the possession of an arrested person, such things being considered as the perquisites of those who made the arrest. The apostle may have been forewarned of his seizure, and therefore prudently committed his few books and his outer garment, which made up all his household stuff, to the care of a certain honest man named Carpus. Although Troas was full six hundred miles' journey from Rome, yet the apostle Paul is too poor to purchase a garment, and so directs Timothy, as he is coming that

way, to bring his cloak. He needs it much, for the sharp winter is coming on, and the dungeon is very, very chilly. This is a brief detail of the circumstances. What kind of cloak it was, certain learned commentators have spent whole pages in trying to discover; but as we know nothing at all about it ourselves, we will leave the question to them, believing that they know as much as we do, but no more.

1. But what does the cloak teach us? There are five or six lessons in it. The first is this—*let us perceive here with admiration, the complete self-sacrifice of the apostle Paul for the Lord's sake.* Remember, my dear friends, what the apostle once was. He was great, famous, and wealthy; he had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. He was so zealous among his brethren, that he could not but have commanded their sincere respect. He was attended by a guard of soldiers when he went from Jerusalem to Damascus. I do not know whether the horse on which he rode was his own, but he must have been a man of importance to have been allotted so important a post in religious matters. He was a man of good standing in society, and doubtless, everybody looking at young Saul of Tarsus would have said, "He will make a great man; he has every chance in life; he has a liberal education, a zealous temperament, abundant gifts, and the general esteem of the Jewish rulers; he will rise to eminence." But when the Lord met him that day on the road to Damascus, how everything changed with him! Then he could truly say, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him." He begins to preach—away goes his character. Now, nothing is too bad for Paul among his Jewish associates. "Away with such a fellow from the earth; it is not fit that he should live," was the exact expression of Jewish feeling towards him. He con-

tinues his labours, and away has gone his wealth—he has either scattered it among the poor, or it has been sequestered by his former friends. He journeys from place to place at no small sacrifice of comfort. The wife to whom he was probably once united—for no unmarried man could vote in Sanhedrim as Paul did against Stephen—had fallen sick and died, and the apostle now preferred a life of singleness, that he might give himself entirely to his work. If in this world only he had hope, he would have been of all men the most miserable. He has at length grown grey, and now the very men who owed their conversion to him have forsaken him. When he first came into Rome they stood with him, but now they have all gone like winter's leaves, and the poor old man, "such an one as Paul the aged," sits with nothing in all the world to call property but an old cloak and a few books, and those are six hundred miles away. Ah! how he emptied himself, and to what extremity of destitution was he willing to bring himself for Christ's name sake. Do not complain that he mentions his clothes: a greater than he did so, and did so in an hour more solemn than that in which Paul wrote the Epistle. Remember who it was that said "They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots." The Saviour must die in absolute nakedness, and the apostle is made something like him as he sits shivering in the cold.

Brethren, was Paul right in all this? Were his sacrifices reasonable? Was the object which he contemplated worthy of all this suffering and self-denial? Was he carried away by an excessive heat of fanaticism to spend upon an inferior object what was not required of him? No believer here thinks so. You all believe that if you could give up substance, and talent, and esteem, yea, and your own life also for Christ, it would be well spent. I say you think so, but how many of us have ever carried it out? Had I not better say, how few of us? There are some who seldom have an opportunity of sacrificing for Christ at all. What they give, is spared

from their superfluity; they never feel it. It is a high luxury when a man has such a love for Jesus that he is able to give until he pinches himself. If Paul were reasonable, what are you and I? If Paul only gives as a Christian should do, how ashamed should we be of ourselves? If he will bring himself to poverty for Christ, what shall we say of those base-born professors who will not lose a trifle in their trade for honesty's sake? What shall we say of those who say "I know how to get money, and I know how to keep it too," and look with scorn upon those who are more generous than they. If you are content to condemn Paul, and charge him with folly, do so, but if not, if this be but a reasonable service, and such as the infinite grace of God which Paul experienced required of him, then let us do something of the like sort. If you have experienced as much love, love the Lord as much, and spend, and be spent for the Lord Jesus.

2. Secondly, dear friends, we learn *how utterly forsaken the apostle was by his friends.* If he had not a cloak of his own, could not some of them lend him one? Ten years before, the apostle was brought in chains along the Appian way to Rome; and fifty miles before he reached Rome, a little band of members of the Church came to meet him; and when he came within twenty miles of the city, at the "Three Taverns," there came a still larger *posse* of the disciples to escort him, so that the chained prisoner Paul went into Rome attended by all the believers in that city. He was then a younger man; but now for some reason or other, ten years afterwards, nobody comes to visit him. He is confined in prison and they do not even know where he is, so that Onesiphorus, when he comes to Rome, has to seek him out very diligently. He is as obscure as if he had never had a name, and though he is still as great and glorious an apostle as ever, men have so forgotten him, and the Church has so despised him, that he is friendless. The Philippian Church, ten years before, had made a collection for him when he was in prison; and though he

had learned in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content, yet he thanked them for their contribution as an offering of a sweet smelling savour unto God. Now he is old, and no Church remembers him. He is brought to trial, and there are Eubulus, and Pudens, and Linus—will not some of them stand by his side when he is brought before the emperor? "At my first answer no man stood with me." Poor soul, he served his God, and worked himself down to poverty for the Church's sake, yet the Church has forsaken him! Oh! how great must have been the anguish of the loving heart of Paul at such ingratitude. Why did not the few who were in Rome, if they had been never so poor, make a contribution for him? Could not those who were of Cæsar's household, have found a cloak for the apostle? No; he is so utterly left, that although he is ready to die of ague in the dungeon, not a soul will lend or give him a cloak. What patience does this teach to those similarly situated! Has it fallen to thy lot, my brother, to be forsaken of friends? Were there other times when your name was the symbol of popularity, when many lived in your favour like insects in your sunbeam—and has it come to this now, that you are forgotten as a dead man out of mind? In your greatest trials do you find your fewest friends? Have those who once loved and respected you, fallen asleep in Jesus? And have others turned out to be hypocritical and untrue? What are you to do now? You are to remember this case of the apostle; it is put here for your comfort. He had to pass through as deep waters as any that you are called to ford, and yet remember, he says, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me." So now, when man deserts you, God will be your friend. This God is our God *for ever and ever*—not in sunshiny weather only, but for ever and ever. This God is our God in dark nights as well as in bright days. Go to him, spread your complaint before him. Murmur not. If Paul had to suffer desertion, you must not expect better usage. Let not your faith fail you, as though some new thing had happened

to you. This is common to the saints. David had his Ahithophel, Christ his Judas, Paul his Demas, and can you expect to fare better than they? As you look at that old cloak, as it speaks of human ingratitude, be of good courage, and wait on the Lord, for he shall strengthen thy heart. "Wait, I say, on the Lord."

3. There is a third lesson. Our text *shows the apostle's independence of mind.* Why did not the apostle borrow a cloak? Why did not he beg one? No, no, no. That is not to the apostle's taste at all. He has a cloak, and though it is six hundred miles away, he will wait until it comes. Though there may be some that may lend, he knows that they who go a borrowing go a sorrowing, and that they who beg are seldom welcome. I do not think a Christian man should blush to borrow or to beg if he be absolutely brought to it, but I never like that class of people who do either systematically. I wish many of the poor would not damage the charity of others by being so ready to beg on every pretence of necessity. A Christian man would do well to remember that it is never to his honour, though it is not always to his dishonour, to beg. "I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed," said the *unfaithful* steward, and if he had been a *faithful* one he would have been more ashamed still. I say again, when it comes to the pinch, and a man must ask of his fellow, let him do it boldly; but let him never be too ready to do it, but, like the apostle, as long as he can do without it, let him say, "I have laboured with my own hand, and eaten no man's bread for nought." He taught that the minister of God had a right to be supported by the people. "If ye partake of their spirituals," says he, "it is right that you give of your temporals." He insists upon it that they are not to muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn; yet, though he holds this as a great general principle, he never takes anything himself; he follows his trade of tent-making; he stitches away at the canvas, and earns his own living, so that he is chargeable unto no man. Noble example! How anxious all Christians ought to have

been to see that he did not come to want in his old age! Yet he does come to poverty; but his independent spirit is not broken to the last, for he will wait till his own cloak is brought six hundred miles, rather than ask any man to give or lend. Let the Christian man be quite as independent, for though independence is not a Christian grace, yet it is a common grace which, when wreathed with Christianity, is very beautiful, and befits the character of a son of God.

4. The fourth remark is: *see here, how very little the apostles thought about how they were dressed.* Paul wants enough to keep him warm; he asks no more. There is no doubt whatever, that the other parts of his garments were getting very dilapidated—that he was indeed, in a state of rags, and so he needed the cloak to wrap about him. We read in olden times of many of the most eminent servants of God being dressed in the poorest manner. When good Bishop Hooper was led out to be burnt, he had been long in prison, and his clothes were so gone from him, that he borrowed an old scholar's gown, full of rags and holes, that he might put it on, and went limping with pains of sciatica and rheumatism to the stake. We read of Jerome of Prague, that he lay in a damp, cold dungeon, and was refused anything to cover him in his nakedness and cold. Some ministers are very careful lest they should not always be dressed in a canonical or gentlemanly manner. I like that remark of Whitfield's, when some one of a bad character wondered how he could preach without a cassock. "Ah," he said, "I can preach without a cassock, but I cannot preach without a character." What matters the outward garment, so long as the character be right? This is a lesson to our private members too. We sometimes hear them say, "I could not come out on the Sabbath: I had not fit clothes to come in." Any clothes are fit to come to the house of God with, if they are paid for, no matter how coarse they may be. If they are the best God has given you, do not murmur. Inasmuch as the trial of raiment is a very sharp one to

some of the poorest of God's people, I think this text was put into the Bible for their comfort. Your Master wore no soft and dainty raiment. His garment was the simple peasant's smock-frock, woven from the top throughout without seam, and yet he never blushed to wear it in the presence of kings and priests. I shall always believe that the Christian ought to cultivate a noble indifference to these outward things; but when it comes to the pinch of absolute want of clothing, then he may comfort himself in this thought, "Now am I companion with the Master; now do I walk in the same temptation as the apostles; now I suffer even as they also suffered." Every saint is an image of Christ, but a poor saint is his express image, for Christ was poor. So, if you are brought to such a pitch with regard to poverty, that you scarcely know how to provide things decent by way of raiment, do not be dispirited; but say, "My Master suffered the same, and so did the apostle Paul;" and so take heart, and be of good cheer.

5. Paul's cloak at Troas shows me *how mighty the apostle was to resist temptation.* "I do not see that," you say. The apostle had the gift of miracles. Our Saviour though able to work miracles, never wrought anything like a miracle on his own account; nor did his apostles. Miraculous gifts were entrusted to them with gospel ends and purposes, for the good of others and for the promotion of the truth; but never for themselves. Our Saviour was tempted of the devil, you will remember, when he was hungry, to turn stones into bread. That was a strong temptation to apply miraculous powers which were intended for other ends, to his own comfort. But he rebuked Satan, and said, "Man shall not live by bread alone." Paul also had power to have created a cloak if he had liked. Why could he not? His very shadow healed the sick; if he had willed it, he could have prevented the cold and damp from having any effect upon himself. He who had once raised to life dead Eutychus, when he had fallen from a loft, and brought back the vital heat, could certainly

have kept the heat in his own body if he had chosen. And I am bold to say, the devil often came to him and said, "If thou be an apostle of God, if thou canst work miracles, command this atmosphere to rise in temperature or these rags to be joined together, and form thee a comfortable raiment." You do not know—you cannot tell, for you were never put to it, what were the stern struggles the apostle must have had in resisting the foul temptation to use his miraculous gifts for himself. O brethren, I am afraid you and I are much more ready to give way to self than was the apostle. We preach the gospel, and if God helps us, oh! directly the devil will have us to take some of the praise. "You preached a good sermon this morning," said one to John Bunyan, as he came down the stairs. "You are too late," said honest John, "the devil told me that when I was preaching." Yes, we work the miracles, but take the honour of it to ourselves. There is the temptation to any man who hath gifts, to use them to his own purposes, and if he does, he is an unfaithful steward to his Master. I do beseech you, whether in the Sunday school or the Church, never let the miracle-working power which God has given you be used for yourselves. You can do for Christ's sake mighty things, through faith and prayer, but never let prayer and faith be prostituted to so base a purpose as to minister unto the flesh. I know carnal minds will not comprehend this, but spiritual minds, who know the temptations of the devil, will know how stern must be a life-long battle to keep ourselves back from doing that which might apparently make us happy, but which would at the same time make us unholy.

6. The sixth lesson from this cloak is, *we are taught in this passage how precisely similar one child of God is to another.* I know we look upon Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, as being very great and blessed beings—we think that they lived in a higher region than we do. We cannot think that if they had lived in these times, they would have been Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We suppose that these are very bad days, and that any great

height of grace, or self-denial, is not very easily attainable. Brethren, my own conviction is, that if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had lived now, instead of being less, they would have been greater saints—for they only lived in the dawn, and we live in the noon. We hear the apostles often called "*Saint*" Peter and "*Saint*" Paul; and thus they are set up on high as on an elevated niche. If we had seen Peter and Paul, we should have thought them very ordinary sort of people—wonderfully like ourselves; and if we had gone into their daily life and trials, we should have said, "Well, you are wonderfully superior to what I am in grace; but somehow or other, you are men of like passions with me. I have a quick temper, so have you, Peter. I have a thorn in the flesh, so have you, Paul. I have a sick house, Peter's wife's mother lies sick of a fever. I complain of the rheumatism, and the apostle Paul, when aged, feels the cold, and wants his cloak." Ah, we must not consider the Bible as a book intended for transcendental super-elevated souls—it is an every-day book; and these good people were everyday people, only they had more grace, but we can get more grace as well as they could; the fountain at which they drew is quite as full and as free to us as to them. We have only to believe after their fashion, and trust to Jesus after their way, and although our trials are the same as theirs, we shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb. I do like to see religion brought out in everyday life. Do not tell me about the godliness of the Tabernacle, tell me about the godliness of your shop, your counter, and your kitchen. Let me see how grace enables you to be patient in the cold, or joyful in hunger, or industrious in labour. Though grace is no common thing, yet it shines best in common things. To preach a sermon, or to sing a hymn, is but a paltry thing compared with the power to suffer cold, and hunger, and nakedness, for Christ's sake. Courage then, courage then, fellow pilgrim, the road was not smoothed for Paul any more than it is for us. There was no royal road to heaven in those days other than

there is even now. They had to go through sloughs, and bogs, and mire, as we do still.

> "They wrestled hard as we do now
> With sins, and doubts, and fears;"

but they have gained the victory at last, and even so shall we. So much then, for the cloak which was left at Troas with Carpus.

II. We will LOOK AT HIS BOOKS. We do not know what the books were about, and we can only form some guess as to what the parchments were. Paul had a few books which were left, perhaps wrapped up in the cloak, and Timothy was to be careful to bring them. *Even an apostle must read.* Some of our very ultro-Calvinistic brethren think that a minister who reads books and studies his sermon must be a very deplorable specimen of a preacher. A man who comes up into the pulpit, professes to take his text on the spot, and talks any quantity of nonsense, is the idol of many. If he will speak without premeditation, or pretend to do so, and never produce what they call a dish of dead men's brains —oh! that is the preacher. How rebuked are they by the apostle! He is inspired, and yet he wants books! He has been preaching at least for thirty years, and yet he wants books! He had seen the Lord, and yet he wants books! He had had a wider experience than most men, and yet he wants books! He had been caught up into the third heaven, and had heard things which it was unlawful for a man to utter, yet he wants books! He had written the major part of the New Testament, and yet he wants books! The apostle says to Timothy and so he says to every preacher, "Give thyself unto reading." The man who never reads will never be read; he who never quotes will never be quoted. He who will not use the thoughts of other men's brains, proves that he has no brains of his own. Brethren, what is true of ministers is true of all our people. *You* need to read. Renounce as much as you will all light literature, but study as much as possible

sound theological works, especially the Puritanic writers, and expositions of the Bible. We are quite persuaded that the very best way for you to be spending your leisure, is to be either reading or praying. You may get much instruction from books which afterwards you may use as a true weapon in your Lord and Master's service. Paul cries, "Bring the books"—join in the cry.

Our second remark is, that *the apostle is not ashamed to confess that he does read.* He is writing to his young son Timothy. Now, some old preachers never like to say a thing which will let the young ones into their secrets. They suppose they must put on a very dignified air, and make a mystery of their sermonizing; but all this is alien from the spirit of truthfulness. Paul wants books, and is not ashamed to tell Timothy that he does; and Timothy may go and tell Tychicus and Titus if he likes—Paul does not care.

Paul herein is a picture of industry. He is in prison; he cannot preach: what will he do? As he cannot preach, he will read. As we read of the fishermen of old and their boats. The fishermen were gone out of them. What were they doing? Mending their nets. So if providence has laid you upon a sick bed, and you cannot teach your class—if you cannot be working for God in public, mend your nets by reading. If one occupation is taken from you, take another, and let the books of the apostle read you a lesson of industry.

He says, "*Especially the parchments.*" I think the books were Latin and Greek works, but that the parchments were Oriental; and possibly they were the parchments of Holy Scripture; or as likely, they were his own parchments, on which were written the originals of his letters which stand in our Bible as the Epistles to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and so on. Now, it must be "*Especially the parchments*" with all our reading; let it be *especially the Bible.* Do you attach no weight to this advice? This advice is more needed in England now than almost at any other time, for the number of persons who read the Bible, I

believe, is becoming smaller every day. Persons read the views of their denominations as set forth in the periodicals; they read the views of their leader as set forth in his sermons or his works, but the Book, the good old Book, the divine fountain-head from which all revelation wells up—this is too often left. You may go to human puddles, until you forsake the clear crystal stream which flows from the throne of God. Read the books, by all manner of means, but especially the parchments. Search human literature, if you will, but especially stand fast by that Book which is infallible, the revelation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

III. We now want to have AN INTERVIEW WITH THE APOSTLE PAUL HIMSELF, for we may learn much from him.

It is almost too dark to see him—we will find him out in that frightful den! The horrid dungeon—the filth lies upon the floor till it looks like a road which is seldom scraped—the draught blows through the only little slit which they call a window. The poor old man, without his cloak, wraps his ragged garment about him. Sometimes you see him kneeling down to pray, and then he dips his pen into the ink, and writes to his dear son Timothy. No companion, except Luke, who occasionally comes in for a short time. Now, how shall we find the old man? What sort of temper will he be in?

We find him *full of confidence in the religion which has cost him so much;* for in the first chapter, at the twelfth verse, we hear him say, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." No doubt, often the tempter said to him, "Paul, why you have lost everything for your religion! It has brought you to beggary. See, you have preached it, and what is the reward of it? The very men you have converted have forsaken you. Give it up, give it up, it cannot be worth all this. Why, they will not even bring you a cloak to wrap round you;

you are left here to shiver, and very soon your head will be struck from your body. Take off your hand from the standard and retire." "No," says the apostle, "I *know* whom I have believed." Why, I have heard of professors who say, "Ever since I have been a Christian I have lost in my business, and therefore I will give it up." But our beloved apostle clings to it with a life-grip. And oh, there is no heart in our piety, if our afflictions make us doubt the truth of our religion, for these trials inasmuch as they work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, render us such that we are not ashamed, but we do the yet more firmly hold on to Christ. Just think you hear the apostle say, "I know whom I believe." It is very easy for *us* to say it. We are very comfortable, sitting easily in our pews; we shall go home to our plentiful meal; we shall be clothed comfortably; we have friends about us who will smile at us, and it is not hard to say, "I know whom I have believed;" but if you were vexed on the one hand by Hermogenes and Philetus, and on the other hand by Alexander the coppersmith, and Demas, you would not find it quite so easy to say, "The Lord is faithful." Behold this noble champion, who is just as much unmoved at the worst as he was at the best times. "I know how to be full," said he once, and now he can say, "I know how to suffer hunger: I know how to abound, and how to suffer loss."

But he is not only confident. You will notice that this grand old man is *having communion with Jesus Christ in his sufferings.* Turn to the second chapter, at the tenth verse. Did ever sweeter language than this come from anyone? "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us: if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." Ah, there are two in the dungeon—not

only the man who is suffering trouble as an evil-doer, even unto bonds, but there sits with him one like unto the Son of Man, sharing all his griefs, and bearing all his despondencies, and so lifting up his head. Well may the apostle rejoice that he has fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

Nor is this all. Not only is he confident for the past, and in sweet communion for the present, but *he is resigned for the future.* Look at the fourth chapter, and the sixth verse. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." It is a beautiful emblem taken from the sacrificial bullock. There it is, tied to the horns of the altar, and ready to be offered. So the apostle stands as a sacrifice ready to be offered upon the altar. I am afraid that we cannot all say we are ready to be offered. Paul was ready to be a *burnt offering;* if God willed it, he would be burnt to ashes at the stake. Or he would be a *drink offering,* as he did become, when a stream of blood flowed under the sharp sword. He was ready to be a *peace offering,* if God willed it, to die in his bed. In any case, he was a *free-will offering* unto God; for he offered himself voluntarily, as he says, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." Glorious old man! Many a professed Christian has been clothed in scarlet, and fared sumptuously every day, and yet never could say he was ready to be offered, but looked upon the time of his departure with grief and sorrow. As you think, then, of poor, shivering, ragged Paul, think of the jewel which he carried in his breast; and O ye sons of poverty, recollect that the magnificence of a holy life, and the grandeur and nobility of a consecrated heart, can deliver you altogether from any shame which may cling to your rags and poverty; for as the sun at setting, paints the clouds with all the colours of heaven, so your very rags, and poverty, and shame, may make your life the more illustrious, as the splendour of your piety lights them with heavenly radiance.

We have not quite concluded with the apostle; for

we find him not only resigned, but *triumphant.* "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." See the Grecian warrior just returned from battle. He has many wounds, and there is a gash across his brow; his breast is streaming here and there with cuts and flesh-wounds; one arm is dislocated; he halts, like Jacob, on his thigh; he is covered with the smoke and dust of battle; he is besmeared with many a blood-splash; he is faint, and weary, and ready to die, but what does he say? As he lifts up his right arm, with his buckler tightly clasped upon it, he cries, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept my shield." That was the object of ambition with every Grecian warrior. If he kept his shield he came home glorious. Now, faith is the Christian's shield. And here I see the apostle, though he wears all the marks of the conflict, yet he triumphs in these marks of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I have fought a good fight; my very scars and wounds prove it; I have kept the faith." He looks to that golden buckler of the faith fastened to his arm, and rejoices in it. The tyrant Nero never had such triumph as the Apostle Paul, nor all the warriors of Rome, when the multitudes climbed the chimney-tops, and looked down upon the procession. None of them had such true glory as this solitary man, who has trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there were none with him; who has stood against the lion, a solitary champion, with no eye to pity and no arm to save, still triumphant to the end. Brave spirit! never mind the old cloak at Troas, so long as thy faith is safe.

Once more; he not only triumphs in the present, but he *is in expectation of a crown.* When the Grecian wrestler had fought a good fight, a crown was presented to him; and so Paul, who writes about the old cloak, also writes—"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." When I was picturing Paul, and talking of the poverty of many

believers—"Ah," said the sinner, "who would be a Christian? Who would suffer so much for Christ? Who would lose everything as Paul did?" Worldly minds here are thinking—"What a fool, to be led away by such an excitement!" Ah! but see how the tables have turned! "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown!" What if he had been robed in scarlet, had rolled in wealth, and been great, and there had been no crown for him in heaven, no joy hereafter, but a fearful looking for of judgment? See, he springs from his dungeon to his throne. Nero may cut off his head, but that head shall wear a starry crown. Courage, then, ye that are down-trodden, afflicted, and despairing, be of good cheer, for the end will make up for the way, and all the roughness of the pilgrimage will be well recompensed by the glory which shall await all those who are resting upon Christ Jesus.

We close, having done with this old cloak, when we say, is it not beautiful as you read this epistle, and, indeed all the apostle's letters, to see how *everything which the apostle thought of was connected with Christ;* how he had concentrated every passion, every power, every thought, every act, every word, and set the whole upon Christ. I believe that there are many who love Christ after a sort, just as the sun shines to-day; but you know if you concentrate the rays of that sun with a burning glass, and fix all the rays upon any object, then what heat there is, what burning, what flame, what fire! So many men scatter their love and admiration on almost every creature, and Christ gets a little, as we all get some rays of the sun; but that is *the man,* who, like the apostle Paul, brings all his thoughts and words to a focus. Then he burns his way through life; his heart is on fire; like coals of juniper are his words; he is a man of force and energy, he may have no cloak, yet for all that he is a great man, and the Czar in his imperial mantle is but a drivelling dwarf by the side of this giant in the army of God. Oh, I wish we could set our thoughts on Christ this morning. Are we trusting

in him this morning? Is he all our salvation and all our desire? If he be, then let us live to him. Those who are wholly Christ's are not many. Oh that we were espoused as chaste virgins unto Christ, that we might have no other lover, and know no other object of delight. Blind be these eyes to all but Christ; and deaf these ears to any music but the voice of Christ; and lame these feet to any way but that of obedience to him; palsied these hands to anything but work for him; and dead this heart to every joy if Jesus cannot move. Even as a straw floats upon the river, and is carried to the ocean, so would I be bereft of all power and will to do aught but that which my Lord would have me do, and be carried along by the stream of his grace right onward, ready to be offered up, or ready to live, ready to suffer, or ready to reign just as he wills, only that he may be served in my living and dying. It will little matter what cloak ye wear, or if ye have not any at all, if ye have but such a concentration of all your bodily and mental powers, and spiritual energies upon Christ Jesus, and upon him alone. May those of you who have never trusted Jesus be ready to rely upon him now. He did not forsake Paul, even in extremity, and he will not forsake you.

> "Trust him, he will ne'er deceive you,
> Though you hardly of him deem;
> He will never, never leave you,
> Nor will let you quite leave him."

Therefore trust him now and ever, for Jesu's sake. Amen.

THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."—MATTHEW XXV. 31–36.

IT is exceedingly beneficial to our souls to mount above this present evil world to something nobler and better. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches are apt to choke everything good within us, and we grow fretful, desponding, perhaps proud, carnal. It is well for us to cut down these thorns and briars, for heavenly seed sown among them is not likely to yield a harvest, and I do not know a better sickle with which to cut them down than thoughts of the kingdom to come. In the valleys in Switzerland many of the inhabitants are deformed and dwarfish, and the whole of them wear a sickly appearance, for the atmosphere is charged with miasma, and is close and stagnant; you traverse them as rapidly as you can, and are glad to escape from them. Up yonder on the mountain you will find a hardy race, who breathe the clear fresh air as it blows from the virgin snows of the Alpine summits. It would be well for their frames if the dwellers in the valley could frequently leave their abodes among the marshes and the fever mists, and get themselves up into the clear atmosphere above. It is to such an exploit of climbing

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that I invite you this morning. May the Spirit of God bear us as upon eagles' wings, that we may leave the mists of fear and the fevers of anxiety, and all the ills which gather in this valley of earth, and get ourselves up to the mountains of future joy and blessedness where it is to be our delight to dwell world without end! Oh may God disentangle us now for a little while, cut the cords that keep us here below, and permit us to mount! We sit, some of us, like chained eagles fastened to the rock, only that, unlike the eagle, we begin to love our chain, and would, perhaps, if it came really to the test, be loth to have it snapped. May God now grant us grace if we cannot at once escape from the chain of mortal life as to our bodies, yet to do so as to our spirits; and leaving the body like a servant at the foot of the hill, may our soul, like Abraham, go to the top of the mountain, and there may we have communion with the Most High.

While expounding my text, I shall ask your attention this morning, first, *to the circumstances which surround the rewarding of the righteous;* secondly, *to their portion;* and thirdly, *to the persons themselves.*

I. There is MUCH OF TEACHING IN THE SURROUNDING CIRCUMSTANCES.

We read, "*When the King shall come in his glory.*" It appears, then, that we must not expect to receive our reward till by-and-by. Like the hireling we must fulfil our day, and then at evening we shall have our penny. Too many Christians look for a present reward for their labours, and if they meet with success, they begin doating upon it as though they had received their recompense. Like the disciples who returned saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us," they rejoice too exclusively in present prosperity; whereas the Master bade them not to look upon miraculous success as being their reward, since that might not always be the case. "Nevertheless," said he, "rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Success in the ministry is not the Christian

minister's true reward: it is an earnest, but the wages still wait. The approbation of your fellowmen you must not look upon as being the reward of excellence, for often you will meet with the reverse; you will find your best actions misconstrued, and your motives ill interpreted. If you are looking for your reward *here* I may warn you of the apostle's words, "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable:" because other men get their reward; even the Pharisee gets his: "Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward;" but we have none here. To be despised and rejected of men is the Christian's lot. Among his fellow Christians he will not always stand in good repute. It is not unmitigated kindness nor unmingled love that we receive even from the saints. I tell you if you look for your reward to Christ's bride herself you will miss it; if you expect to receive your crown from the hand even of your brethren in the ministry who know your labours, and who ought to sympathize with your trials, you will be mistaken. "When the King shall come in his glory," then is your time of recompense; but not to-day, nor to-morrow, nor at any time in this world. Reckon nothing which you acquire, no honour which you gain, to be the reward of your service to your Master; that is reserved to the time "when the King shall come in his glory."

Observe with delight the august person by whose hand the reward is given. It is written, "When *the King* shall come." Brethren, we love the King's courtiers; we delight to be numbered with them ourselves. It is no mean thing to do service to him whose head—"Though once 'twas crowned with thorns, is crowned with glory now." But it is a delightful thought that the service of rewarding us will not be left to the courtiers. The angels will be there, and the brethren of the King will be there; but heaven was not prepared by them, nor can it be given by them. Their hands shall not yield us a coronation; we shall join their songs, but their songs would be no reward for us; we

shall bow with them and they with us, but it will not be possible for them to give us the recompense of the reward—that starry crown is all too weighty for an angel's hand to bring, and the benediction all too sweet to be pronounced, even by seraphic lips. The King himself must say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." What say you to this, my dear brother? You have felt a temptation to look to God's servants, to the approbation of the minister, to the kindly look of parents, to the word of commendation from your fellow-worker; all these you value, and I do not blame you; but these may fail you, and therefore never consider them as being *the* reward. You must wait till the time when the King cometh, and then it will neither be your brethren, your pastors, your parents, nor your helpers, but the King himself who shall say to you, "Come, ye blessed." How this sweetens heaven! It will be Christ's own gift. How this makes the benediction doubly blessed! It shall come from his lips, which drop like myrrh and flow with honey. Beloved, it is Christ who became a curse for us, who shall give the blessing to us. Roll ye this as a sweet morsel under your tongues.

The character in which our Lord Jesus shall appear is significant. Jesus will then be revealed as truly "*the King*." "When the *King* shall come." It was to him as King that the service was rendered, and it is from him as King that the reward must therefore come; and so upon the very threshold a question of self-examination arises: "The King will not reward the servants of another prince—am I therefore his servant? Is it my joy to wait at the threshold of his gates, and sit like Mordecai at the courts of Ahasuerus—at the entrance of his door? Say, soul, dost thou serve *the* King?" I mean not the kings and queens of earth; let them have loyal servants for their subjects; but saints are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings—are ye so? If ye be not so, when the King cometh in his glory, there can be no reward for you. I long in my own heart to recognize Christ's kingly office

more than ever I have done. It has been my delight to preach to you Christ dying on the cross, and "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross;" but I want for my own self to realize him on his throne, reigning in my heart, having a right to do as he wills with me, that I may get to the condition of Abraham, who, when God spoke, though it was to tell him to offer up his own Isaac, never asked a question, but simply said, "Here am I." Beloved, seek to know and feel the controlling power of the King, for else when he comes, since you have not known him as King, he cannot know you as servant; and it is only to the servant that the King can give the reward which is spoken of in the text, —"When the King shall come."

Now pass on. "When the King shall come in his *glory*." The fulness of that it is impossible to conceive.

> "Imagination's utmost stretch,
> In wonder dies away."

But this we know,—and it is the sweetest thing we can know,—that if we have been partakers with Jesus in his shame, we also shall be sharers with him in the lustre which shall surround him. Art thou, beloved, one with Christ Jesus? Art thou of his flesh and of his bones? Does a vital union knit thee to him? Then thou art to-day with him in his shame; thou hast taken up his cross, and gone with him without the camp bearing his reproach; thou shalt doubtless be with him when the cross is exchanged for the crown. But judge thyself this morning; if thou art not with him in the regeneration, neither shalt thou be with him when he shall come in his glory. If you start back from the black side of communion, you shall not understand its bright, its happy period, when the King shall come in his glory and all his holy angels with him. What, are angels with him? And yet he took not up angels, he took up the seed of Abraham. Are the holy angels with him? Come, my soul, then thou canst not be far from him. If his friends and his neighbours are called

together to see his glory, what thinkest thou if thou art married to him? Shalt thou be distant? Though it be a day of judgment, yet thou canst not be far from that heart which having admitted angels into intimacy has admitted thee into union. Has he not said to thee, O my soul, "I have betrothed thee unto me in faithfulness, and in judgment, and in righteousness"? Have not his own lips said it, "I am married unto thee, and my delight is in thee"? Then if the angels, who are but the friends and the neighbours, shall be with him, it is abundantly certain that his own beloved Hephzibah, in whom is all his delight, shall be near to him and shall be a partaker of his splendour. It is when he comes in his glory, and when his communion with angels shall be distinctly recognised,—it is then that his unity with his Church shall become apparent. "*Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.*" Here is a repetition of the same reason why it should be your time and my time to receive the reward from Christ if we be found among his faithful servants. When *he* sits upon his throne it were not fit that his own beloved ones should be in the mire. When he was in the place of shame they were with him, and now he is on the throne of gold they must be with him too. There were no oneness,—union with Christ were a mere matter of talk,—if it were not certain that when he is on the throne they shall be upon the throne too.

But I want you to notice one particular circumstance with regard to the time of the reward. It is *when he shall have divided the sheep from the goats.* My reward, if I be a child of God, cannot come to me while I am in union with the wicked. Even on earth you will have the most enjoyment of Christ when you are most separated from this world: rest assured, although the separated path does not seem an easy one, and it will certainly entail upon you persecution and the loss of many friends, yet it is the happiest walking in the world. You conforming Christians, who can enter into the world's mirth to a certain degree, you cannot, you never

can know as you now are, the inward joys of those who live in lonely but lovely fellowship with Jesus. The nearer you get to the world the further you must be from Christ, and I believe the more thoroughly a bill of divorce is given by your spirit to every earthly object upon which your soul can set itself, the more close will be your communion with your Lord. "Forget also thine own country and thy Father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him." It is significant that not until the King has separated the sheep from the goats does he say, "Come, ye blessed;" and though the righteous will have enjoyed a felicity as disembodied spirits, yet as risen from the grave in their bodies, their felicity is not fully accomplished till the great Shepherd shall have appeared to separate them once for all, by a great gulf which cannot be passed, from all association with the nations that forget God. Now then, beloved, these circumstances all put together come to this, that the reward of following Christ is not to-day, is not among the sons of men, is not from men, is not even from the excellent of the earth, is not even bestowed by Jesus while we are here, but the glorious crown of life which the Lord's grace shall give to his people is reserved for the second advent, "when the King shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him." Wait with patience, wait with joyful expectation, for he shall come, and blessed be the day of his appearing.

II. We have now to turn to the second point—THE PORTION ITSELF. Every word is suggestive. I shall not attempt to exhaust, but merely to glance at all. The reward of the righteous is set forth by the loving benediction pronounced to them by the Master, but *their very position* gives some foreshadowing of it. He put the sheep on his right hand. Heaven is a position of the most elevated dignity authoritatively conferred, and of Divine complacency manifestly enjoyed. God's saints are always at his right hand according to the judgment of faith, but hereafter it shall be more clearly manifested.

God is pleased to be close to his people, and to place them near to himself in a place of protection. Sometimes it seems as if they were at the left hand; they certainly have, some of them, less comfort than the worldlings. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree; their eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than heart could wish;" whereas his people are often made to drink waters of a full cup, and their meat and their drink are bittered with wormwood and gall. The world is upside down now; the gospel has begun to turn it the right way uppermost, but when the day of grace is over, and the day of glory comes, then shall it be righted indeed; then those that wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins shall be clothed in glittering apparel, being transfigured like the Saviour upon Tabor; then those of whom the world was not worthy shall come to a world that shall be worthy of them; then those who were hurried to the stake and to the flames shall triumph with chariots of fire and horses of fire, and swell the splendour of the Master's pompous appearing. Yes, beloved, you shall eternally be the object of Divine complacency, not insecret and unmanifested communion, but your state and glory shall be revealed before the sons of men. Your persecutors shall gnash their teeth when they see you occupying places of honour at his right hand, and themselves, though greater far than you on earth, condemned to take the lowest room. How shall Dives bite his fire-tormented tongue in vain as he sees Lazarus, the beggar on the dunghill, made to sit at the right hand of the King eternal and immortal! Heaven is a place of dignity. "There we shall be as the angels," saith one, but I wot we shall be even superior than they. Is it not written of him who in all things is our representative, "Thou hast put all things under his feet"? Even the very seraphs themselves so richly blessed, what are they but "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation"?

But now turning to the welcome uttered by the judge.

The first word is "*Come.*" It is the gospel symbol. The law said "Go;" the gospel saith "Come." The Spirit saith it in invitation; the Bride saith it in intercession; "let him that heareth" say it by constantly, laboriously endeavouring to spread abroad the good news. Since Jesus saith "Come," we learn that the very essence of heaven is communion. "Come!" Ye came near enough to say "Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief!" On the cross ye looked to me and were lightened. Ye had fellowship with me in bearing my cross. Ye filled up that which was behind of the sufferings of Christ for his body's sake, which is the Church. Still come! Ever, come! For ever come! Come up from your graves, ye risen ones! Come up from among the ungodly, ye consecrated ones! Come up from where ye cast yourselves down in your humiliation before the great white throne! Come up to wear my crown, and sit with me upon my throne! Oh, that word has heaven lurking within it. It shall be to you your joy for ever to hear the Saviour say to you, "Come." I protest before you my soul has sometimes been so full of joy that I could hold no more when my beloved Lord has said "Come" to my soul; for he has taken me into his banqueting house, and his love-banner has waved over my head, and he has taken me away from the world, and its cares and its fears, and its trials and its joys, up to "the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon," where he manifested himself to me. When this "Come" shall come into your ear from the Master's lips there shall not be the flesh to drag you back, there shall be no sluggishness of spirit, no heaviness of heart; you shall come eternally then; you shall not mount to descend again, but mount on and on in one blessed Excelsior for ever and for ever. The first word indicates that heaven is a state of communion—"Come."

Then it is "*Come, ye blessed,*" which is a clear declaration that this is a state of happiness. They cannot be more blessed than they are. They have their hearts'

desire, and though their hearts have been enlarged and their desires have been expanded by entering into the Infinite, and getting rid of the cramping influences of corruption and of time, yet even when their desire shall know no bound they shall have all the happiness that the utmost stretch of their souls can by any possibility conceive. This much, and this is all we know—they are supremely blessed. Their blessedness you perceive does not come from any secondary joy, but from the great primary Source of all good. "Come, ye blessed of my Father." They drink the unadulterated wine at the winepress itself, where it joyously leaps from the bursting clusters; they pluck celestial fruits from the unwithering boughs of the immortal tree; they shall sit at the well head and drink the waters as they spring with unrivalled freshness from the depths of the heart of Deity; they shall not be basking in the beams of the sun, but they shall be like Uriel, the angel in the sun; they shall dwell in God, and so their souls shall be satisfied with favour, and full and more than full with his presence and benediction.

Notice, once again, that according to the words used it is a state where they shall recognise their right to be there; a state therefore of perfect freedom, and ease and fearlessness. It is—"*inherit the kingdom.*" A man does not fear to lose that which he wins by descent from his parent. If heaven had been the subject of earning, we might have feared that our merits had not really deserved it, and therefore suspect that one day a Writ of Error would be issued and that we should be ejected; but we do know whose sons we are; we know whose love it is that makes glad our spirits, and when we "inherit" the kingdom we shall enter it not as strangers or as foreigners, but as sons coming to their birthright. Looking over all its streets of gold and surveying all its walls of pearl, we shall feel that we are at home in our own house, and have an actual right, not through merit but through grace, to everything that is there. It will be a state of heavenly bliss; the

Christian shall feel that law and justice are on his side, and that those stern attributes have brought him there as well as mercy and loving-kindness. But the word "inherit" here imports full possession and enjoyment. They have inherited in a certain sense before, but now as an heir when he has arrived at full maturity begins to spend his own money, and to farm his own acres, so do they enter into their heritage. We are not full grown as yet, and therefore are not admitted to full possession. But wait awhile; those grey hairs betoken, my brethren, that you are getting ripe. These, these, these my still youthful locks show me alas that I may have to tarry for a little longer, and yet I know not, the Lord may soon permit me to sleep with my fathers; but later or earlier, be it as he wills, we shall one day come into possession of the goodly land. Now if it is sweet to be an heir while you are in nonage, what is it to be an heir when arrived at perfect manhood? Was it not delightful to sing that hymn just now, and to behold the land of pure delight, whose everlasting spring and never-withering flowers are just across the narrow stream of death. Oh ye sweet fields! Ye saints immortal who lie down therein! When shall we be with you and be satisfied? If the mere thinking of heaven ravishes the soul, what must it be to be there, to plunge deep into the stream of blessedness, to dive and find no bottom, to swim and find no shore? To sip of the wine of heaven as we sometimes do makes our hearts so glad that we know not how to express our joy; but what will it be to drink deep and drink again, and sit for ever at the table and know that the feast will never be over and the cups will never be empty, and that there will be no worse wine to be brought out at the last, but if possible better still and better still in infinite progression?

The word "*kingdom*," which stands next, indicates the richness of the heritage of saints. It is no petty estate, no alms rooms, no happy corner in obscurity. I heard a good man say he should be content to win a

corner behind the door. I shall not be. The Lord says we shall inherit a *kingdom*. We would not be satisfied to inherit less, because less than that would not suit our character. "He hath made us kings and priests unto God," and we must reign for ever and ever, or be as wretched as deposed monarchs. A king without a kingdom were an unhappy man. If I were a poor servant, an alms room would be a boon, for it would consort with my condition and degree; but if I am made by grace a king, I must have a kingdom, or I shall not have attained to a position equal to my nature. He who makes us kings will give us a kingdom to fit the nature which he hath bestowed upon us. Beloved, do strive after, more and more, that which the Spirit of God will give you, a kingly heart; do not be among those who are satisfied and contented with the miserable nature of ordinary humanity. A child's glass bead is all the world is to a truly royal spirit; these glittering diadems are only nursery toys to God's kings; the true jewels are up there; the true treasury wealth looks down upon the stars. Do not stint your soul; be not straitened! Get a kingly heart—ask the King of kings to give it to you, and beg of him a royal spirit. Act royally on earth towards your Lord, and for his sake towards all men. Go about the world not as mean men in spirit and act, but as kings and princes of a race superior to the dirt-scrapers who are on their knees crawling in the mud after yellow earth. Then, when your soul is royal, remember with joy that your future inheritance shall be all that your kingly soul pants after in its most royal moments. It will be a state of unutterable richness and wealth of soul.

According to the word "*prepared*," we may conceive it to be a condition of surpassing excellence. It is a *kingdom prepared*, and it has been so long a time prepared, and he who prepares it is so wondrously rich in resources, that we cannot possibly conceive how excellent it must be. If I might so speak, God's common gifts, which he throws away as though they were but

nothing, are priceless; but what will be these gifts upon which the infinite mind of God has been set for ages of ages in order that they may reach the highest degree of excellence? Long before Christmas chimes were ringing, mother was so glad to think her boy was coming home, after the first quarter he had been out at school, and straightway she began preparing and planning all sorts of joys for him. Well might the holidays be happy when mother had been contriving to make them so. Now in an infinitely nobler manner the great God has prepared a kingdom for his people; he has thought, "that will please them, and that will bless them," and this other will make them superlatively happy." He prepared the kingdom to perfection; and then, as if that were not enough, the glorious man Christ Jesus went up from earth to heaven; and you know what he said when he departed,—"I go to prepare a place for you." We know that the infinite God can prepare a place fitting for a finite creature, but the words smile so sweetly at us as we read that Jesus himself, who is a man, and therefore knows our hearts' desires, has had a finger in it; *he* has prepared it too. It is a kingdom prepared for you, upon which the thoughts of God have been set to make it excellent "from before the foundation of the world."

But we must not pause: it is a "kingdom prepared for *you*." Mark that! I must confess I do not like certain expressions which I hear sometimes, which imply that heaven is prepared for some who will never reach it; prepared for those who will be driven as accursed ones into the place of torment. I know there is a sacred expression which says, "let no man take thy crown;" but that refers to the crown of ministerial success, rather than of eternal glory. An expression which grated on my ear the other evening from the lips of a certain good man, ran something in this fashion: "There is a heaven prepared for all of you, but if you are not faithful you will not win it. There is a crown in heaven laid up for you, but if you are not faithful

it will be without a wearer." I do not believe it, I cannot believe it. That the crown of eternal life which is laid up for the blessed of the Father will ever be given to anybody else or left without possessor, I do not believe. I dare not conceive of crowns in heaven and nobody to wear them. Think you that in heaven, when the whole number of saints is complete, you will find a number of unused crowns? "Ah! what are these for? Where are the heads for these?" "They are in hell!" Then, brother, I have no particular desire to be in heaven, for if all the family of Christ are not there, my soul will be wretched and forlorn because of their sad loss, because I am in union with them all. If one soul that believed in Jesus does not get there I shall lose respect for the promise and respect for the Master too; he must keep his word to every soul that resteth on him. If your God has gone the length of actually preparing a place for his people and has made provision for them and been disappointed, he is no God to me, for I could not adore a disappointed God. I do not believe in such a God. Such a being would not be God at all. The notion of disappointment in his eternal preparations is not consistent with Deity. Talk thus of Jupiter and Venus if you please, but the Infinite Jehovah is, as far as human speech can dishonour him, dishonoured by being mentioned in such a connection. He has prepared a place for *you*. Here is personal election. He has made a distinct ordinance for every one of his people that where he is there shall they be.

"Prepared from before the foundation of the world." Here is eternal election appearing before men were created, preparing a crown before heads were made to wear it. And so God had before the starry skies began to gleam carried out the decree of election in a measure which when Christ shall come shall be perfected to the praise of the glory of his grace, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his will." Our portion then is one prepared from all eternity for us according to the election of God's grace, one suitable to the loftiest character to

which we can ever attain, which will consist in nearness to Christ, communion with God, and standing for ever in a place of dignity and happiness.

III. And now I have very little time to speak, as I hoped to have spoken this morning about THE PERSONS WHO SHALL COME THERE.

They are recognisable by a secret and by a public character. Their *name* is—"blessed of the Father,"—the Father chose them, gave his Son for them, justified them through Christ, preserved them in Christ Jesus, adopted them into the family, and now accepted them into his own house. Their *nature* you have described in the word "inherit." None can inherit but sons; they have been born again, and have received the nature of God; having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, they have become partakers of the Divine nature: they are sons. Their *appointment* is mentioned; "inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from before the foundation of the world." Their name is "blessed," their nature is that of a child, their appointment is that of God's decree.

Their doings, their outward doings, these we want to speak a minute upon. They appear to have been distinguished among men for deeds of charity, and these were not in any way associated with ceremonies or outward observances. It is not said that they preached—they did so, some of them; it is not said that they prayed—they must have done so, or they would not have been spiritually alive. The actions which are selected as their type, are actions of charity to the indigent and forlorn. Why these? I think, because *the general audience assembled around the throne would know how to appreciate this evidence of their newborn nature.* The King might think more of their prayers than of their alms, but the multitude would not. He speaks so as to gain the verdict of all assembled. Even their enemies could not object to his calling those blessed who had performed these actions; for if there be an action which wins for men the universal consent to their

goodness, it is an action by which men would be served. Against this there is no law. I have never heard of a state in which there was a law against clothing the naked and feeding the hungry. Humanity at once, when its conscience is so seared that it cannot see its own sinfulness, yet detects the virtuousness of feeding the poor. Doubtless this is one reason why these actions were selected. And again, they may have been chosen as evidences of grace, because, *as actions, they are a wonderful means of separating between the hypocrite and the true Christian.* Dr. Gill has an idea, and perhaps he is right, that this is not a picture of the general judgment, but of the judgment of the professing Church, and if so, it is all the more reasonable to conclude that these works of mercy are selected as the appropriate discerner between the hypocrite and the sincere. I fear that there are some of you high professors who could not stand the test. "Good praying people" they call you, but what do you give to the Lord? Your religion has not touched your pockets. This does not apply to some of you, for there are many here of whom I would venture to speak before the bar of God, that I know their substance to be consecrated to the Lord and his poor, and I have sometimes thought that beyond their means they have given both to the poor and to God's cause. But there are others of a very different disposition. Now here I shall give you a little plain English talk which none can fail to understand. You may talk about your religion till you have worn your tongue out, and you may get others to believe you; and you may remain in the Church twenty years, and nobody ever detect you in anything like an inconsistency; but, if it be in your power, and you do nothing to relieve the necessities of the poor members of Christ's body, you will be damned as surely as if you were drunkards or whoremongers. If you have no care for God's Church this text applies to you, and will as surely sink you to the lowest hell as if you had been common blasphemers. That is very plain English, but it is the plain

meaning of my text, and it is at my peril that I flinch from telling you of it. "I was an hungred, and ye gave me"—what? good advice; yes, but no meat. "I was thirsty, and ye gave me"—what? a tract, and no drink. "I was naked, and ye gave me"—what? your good wishes, but no clothes. I was a stranger, and—ye pitied me, but—ye took me not in. I was sick, you said you could recommend me a doctor, but you did not visit me. I was in prison, I, God's servant, a persecuted one, put in prison for Christ's sake, and you said I should be more cautious; but you did not stand by my side and take a share of the blame, and bear with me reproach for the truth's sake. You see this is a very terrible winnowing fan to some of you niggardly ones whose main object is to get all you can and hold it fast, but it is a fan which frequently must be used. Whoever deceives you, or spares you, by the grace of God, I will not, but will labour to be more bold than ever in denouncing sin. "Well," says one, "what are those to do who are so poor that they have nothing to give away?" My dear brother, do you notice how beautifully the text takes care of you. It hints that there are some who cannot give bread to the hungry, and clothes to the naked, but what about them? Why you see they are the persons spoken of as "my brethren," who receive the boon of kindness, so that this passage comforts the poor and by no means condemns them. Certain of us honestly give to the poor all we can spare, and then of course everybody comes to such; and when we say, "Really, I cannot give any more," somebody snarls and says, "Call yourself a Christian?" "Yes, I do, I should not call myself a Christian if I gave away other people's money; I should not call myself a Christian if I gave away what I have not got; I should call myself a thief, pretending to be charitable when I could not pay my debts." I have a very great pity indeed for those people who get into the Bankruptcy Court, I do not mean the debtors, I have seldom much sympathy with them, I have a good deal

for the creditors who lose by having trusted dishonest people. If any man should say, "I will live beyond my means in order to get a good character," my dear brother, you begin wrong, that action is in itself wrong. What you have to give must be that which is your own. "But I shall have to pinch myself," says one, "if I do it." Well, pinch yourself! I do not think there is half the pleasure in doing good till you get to the pinching point. This remark of course applies only to those of us of moderate means, who can soon distribute our alms and get down to the pinch point—when you begin to feel, "Now, I must go without that; now I must curtail these in order to do more good." Oh! you cannot tell; it is then when you really can feel, "Now I have not given God merely the cheese parings and candle ends that I could not use, but I have really cut out for my master a good piece of the loaf; I have not given him the old crusts that were getting mouldy, but I have given him a piece of my own daily bread, and I am glad to do it if I can show my love to Jesus Christ by denying myself." If you are doing this, if you are thus out of love to Jesus feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, I believe that these are put down as tests, because they are such blessed detectives between the hypocrites and the really godly people. When you read "for" here, you must not understand it to be that their reward is *because* of this, but that they are proved to be God's servants by this; and so, while they do not merit it because of these actions, yet these actions show that they were saved by grace, which is evidenced by the fact that Jesus Christ wrought such and such works in them. If Christ does not work such things in you, you have no part in him; if you have not produced such works as these you have not believed in Jesus. Now somebody says, "Then I intend to give to the poor in future in order that I may have this reward." Ah, but you are very much mistaken if you do that. The Duke of Burgundy was waited upon by a poor man, a very loyal subject, who brought him a very large root

which he had grown. He was a very poor man indeed, and every root he grew in his garden was of consequence to him; but merely as a loyal offering he brought to his prince the largest his little garden produced. The prince was so pleased with the man's evident loyalty and affection that he gave him a very large sum. The steward thought, "Well, I see this pays; this man has got fifty pounds for his large root, I think *I* shall make the duke a present." So he bought a horse and he reckoned that he should have in return ten times as much for it as it was worth, and he presented it with that view: the duke, like a wise man, quietly accepted the horse, and gave the greedy steward nothing. That was all. So you say, "Well, here is a Christian man, and he gets rewarded. He has been giving to the poor, helping the Lord's Church, and see he is saved; the thing pays, I shall make a little investment." Yes, but you see the steward did not give the horse out of any idea of loyalty, and kindness, and love to the duke, but out of very great love to himself, and therefore had no return; and if you perform deeds of charity out of the idea of getting to heaven by them, why it is yourself that you are feeding, it is yourself that you are clothing; all your virtue is not virtue, it is rank selfishness, it smells strong of selfhood, and Christ will never accept it; you will never hear him say, "Thank you" for it. You served yourself, and no reward is due. You must first come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and look to him to save you; you will for ever abjure all idea of doing anything to save yourself, and being saved, you will be able to give to the poor and so on without selfishness mixing with your motive, and you will get a reward of grace for the love token which you have given. It is necessary to believe in Christ in order to be capable of true virtue of the highest order. It is necessary to trust Jesus, and to be yourself fully saved, before there is any value in your feeding the hungry or clothing the naked. God give you grace to go to my Master wounded yonder, and to rest in the precious atonement which he has made for

human sin; and when you have done that, being loved at such a rate, show that you love in return; being purchased so dearly, live for him that bought you; and among the actions by which you prove it, let these gleam and glisten like God-given jewels,—the visiting of the sick, the comforting of the needy, the relieving of the distressed, and the helping of the weak. God accept these offerings as they come from gracious souls, and to him be praise evermore. Amen.

TURNING BACK IN THE DAY OF BATTLE.

"The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle."—PSALM lxxviii. 9.

I DO not think that it has ever been clearly ascertained to what particular historical event Asaph here refers, but I do not find that any of the commentators mention a very obscure passage in the First Book of Chronicles, which I venture to suggest may give us the explanation. In the first Book of Chronicles, the seventh chapter and the twentieth verse, you read:—"And the sons of Ephraim; Shuthelah, and Bered his son, and Tahath his son, and Eladah his son, and Tahath his son, and Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezer, and Elead, whom the men of Gath that were born in that land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him." This event appears to have occurred while the children of Israel were still in Egypt. It has been supposed by some that these sons of Ephraim made a raid upon the promised land, and attacked the men of Gath. Believing the land to be theirs by promise they went to take it before they had divine authority so to do. They made God's decrees the rule of their life instead of God's revealed will, and so they soon fell into trouble,—as those people always do who make that mistake,—and their father Ephraim mourned over them many days. But it appears to have been rather an attack made upon them by some men of Gath. The people seem some of them to have been of Egyptian origin, and they probably made an attack upon the cattle of the men of

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Ephraim. These young men defended their cattle for a time, but at last—if this be the event which this Psalm refers to—it would appear they turned their backs and so fell slain. That may or may not be. Still there are other passages in history which might serve to illustrate the text. You are aware that Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim, and probably on account of this, the ark of God was first placed at Shiloh. On the occasion when Hophni and Phineas were slain, the children of Israel, we are told, fled. It appears to have been the peculiar duty of the men of Ephraim, in whose tribe Shiloh was, to guard the ark. It may be possible that they were set around the ark as a body-guard to it, but fled at the approach of the Philistines, or fell slain together with Hophni and Phineas on that terrible and disastrous day. If this is the event alluded to you will find the history of it in the fourth chapter of the First Book of Samuel. Perhaps, however, reference is made to the whole history of the tribe of Ephraim, that though they were well armed and were dexterous men in the use of the bow, yet on many occasions they turned their backs in the day of battle. Whether any of these explanations interpret the historical reference or not, the subject in itself will furnish us with a theme for meditation.

I. We will first consider for a little while WHAT THESE MEN DID.

They turned their backs. When the time for fighting came they ought to have shown their fronts. Like bold men they should have kept their face to the foe and their breast against the adversary, but they dishonourably turned their backs and fled. This, I am sorry to say, is not an unusual thing amongst professing Christians. They turn back; they turn back in the day of battle. Some do this *at the first appearance of difficulty.* "There is a lion in the way," saith the slothful man, "I shall be slain in the streets." They hear that there is some trouble involved in Christian service, or that some persecution may be met with in the pursuit of

truth, and straightway they look before they leap, as the world hath it, and turn back from the way which they supposed to be that of safety. Timorous and Mistrust come running down the hill crying, "The lions! the lions!" and thus may a pilgrim turn back towards the City of Destruction.

Others are somewhat braver. They bear the first brunt. When the skirmishers begin these are as bold as any; they can return blow for blow, and you hear them boast, as they buckle on their armour, at such a rate, that you would suppose, if you did not know that boasters are seldom good at fighting, that they must certainly be victorious. During the first thrust they stand like martyrs and behave like heroes, but very soon, when the armour gets a little battered, and the fine plume on their helmet a little stained, they turn back in the day of battle.

Some professors bear the fight a little longer. They are not to be laughed out of their religion; they can stand the jeers and jests of their old companions. When they find that they have got the cut direct in the society which once loved them so much they can put up with that, and they are very much complimented by themselves on having done it. "Cowards," say they, "are those who flee; but we shall never do this." But by and by the skirmishers have done their work, and it comes to a hand-to-hand fight; the struggle begins to be somewhat more arduous, and now shall we see what metal they are made of. The enemy gets hold of them, and

> "That desperate hug their soul might feel
> Through bars of brass and triple steel."

Then they find that they are being hugged in the wrong place; they are touched in a tender part, and so they also turn back in the day of battle!

And, alas! sad as it is to say it—firmly as we believe that every child of God is safe, yet is it true that many who profess to be so, after having fought so long that

you would suppose the next thing would be for them to rest upon their laurels and receive their crown, just at the very last they fall and turn back! We have seen grey-headed apostates as well as juvenile ones. There have been those who seemed to wear well for a time, but at last one crushing blow came which they could not bear, and they gave way before it! Oh, brethren, it is only those who persevere to the end that will be saved, and only those who have a true faith in Jesus Christ have a sure evidence of their election of God; these be they who shall be clothed with white raiment, and shall sit down upon his throne for ever. But, how many who bade fair to do this, after all turn back!

I may be describing—I hope I am not—some actual case here. Some of you may say as you turn the thought over in your minds,—

> "My feet had almost gone;
> My steps had well nigh slipped."

That young man over yonder was so much jeered at the other day by those with whom he works, that he felt it was very unkind, and he did think something about renouncing his religion altogether. And my other brother yonder, who has had so many losses, has lately had such a time as he never had before, and he thinks nobody else ever had, and he cries, "God has forsaken me." He cannot just now say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him;" but he thinks, "Surely I had better turn to the world; I had better leave my religion and give it up, for I am encompassed about with such a terrible conflict that I shall never win the victory!" Ah! brethren, these are often the trials that God sends, and it is by these that he separates the chaff from the wheat, and lets us see who are true soldiers, and who are only the lacqueys who wear regimentals, but have not the soldier's heart pulsing beneath the scarlet. God grant us grace to be found at last men that turned *not* back in the day of battle.

If I take the history of the children of Ephraim, I should say that they turned their backs and *failed to defend the ark.* There are some who, when they are defending the truth, shun controversy. They are of such a timid disposition—a loving disposition they call it—that as soon as ever the war-trumpet sounds they find it to be their duty to attend to the baggage in the rear. They are very brave men indeed in that particular quarter of the conflict where it does not happen to rage; but there in the van, where the corpses are piled on heaps, and where the battle-axes drip with gore, they never will be found, because they have not the courage to fight and to conquer for Jesus. As far as they are concerned the ark of God may be taken by the Philistines, because they turn their backs.

These Ephraimites ought, too, as Joshua had set them the example, *to have conquered Canaan, and to have driven out the Canaanites still left.* Ah! my brethren, there are some of you whose sins still live, because you have turned your backs upon them, but not in the right sense, for you have turned your backs against contending with sin. There is that bad temper of yours—you have given up trying to curb it now. You say, "Well, you know many of God's children have bad tempers," whereas you know that this is very wicked talking. You ought to slay that Agag. You have no business to tolerate a bad temper. You must never have any peace with that spiteful temper, or that hasty temper of yours; you must down with it, or else it will down with you, and if you do not overcome it, it will overcome you. Rest assured that you are guilty, and that you turn your back if you do not fight with it. So too with that worldliness of yours and that want of a prayerful spirit. If you say, "Well, I will be content to be as I am; I will not try after a high state of piety," you turn your backs, my brethren. You ought to slay all these Canaanites, and you must in Christ's name do it, and not spare so much as one of them, but say, "they compass me about, like bees, yea, they compass me

about, but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them."

And then, when these people turned their backs, *Canaan was not won.* So it is with you. The Lord's kingdom is not yet fully extended, and just when you ought to be pushing far and wide the conquests of the cross, and be letting this great city of ours know that the King reigneth mighty to save, you turn back in the day of battle. There are some Christians here who are doing nothing. I should not say this, perhaps, if I were preaching on Sunday, for I thank God that I could not in my own heart say it of my own members; the most of them are doing, I believe, as much as lieth in them, or if not, I hope they very soon will be. But I am persuaded that there are many other Christians who are not doing what they should do, but are shrinking from practical service. They come in here, perhaps, on a Thursday night, and get a little bit, and they go elsewhere on other evenings of the week and pick up sweet morsels and crumbs. They like feeding very well, but they do not like work so much. There is a certain little company that come here on week-day evenings, into whose ears I should like to whisper, and ask them what they are doing for Christ. They are spiritual vagrants who go from one place to another, but have no settled home where they work for the Master, and they are of very little credit to anybody. We must all of us have a sphere of labour, and though I am glad to see all of you, as many as like to come, yet I pray you do have your own place for your own work, and do not be like the children of Ephraim who "turned back in the day of battle."

II. Having thus observed what these men of Ephraim did, we come to look at the inopportune time WHEN THEY DID IT.

They turned back, and their doing so would not have mattered much had they done it in a day of feasting. They could always be spared then, but that was not when they did it. They always had their faces to the

front when there was any feasting to be done. They turned back; when? On holidays, when the banners waved high and the silver trumpets sounded? No; they were in the front then! Exeter Hall! May meetings! How many people are in the front there and then? When there is something sweet to feed upon they do not think of turning back. But these people turned back on rather a different occasion; they turned back *in the day of battle.* They turned back, it seems then, just when they were to be tried. Ah! how much there is we do that will not stand trial! How much there is of godliness which is useful for anything excepting that which it is meant for! It is all in vain for me to say, if I have bought a water-proof coat, that it is good for everything except keeping the water out. Why, then it is good for nothing, and so there are some Christians who have got a religion that is good for every day except the day when it has to be tested, and then it is good for nothing. An anchor may be very pretty on shore, and it may be very showy as an ornament when it lies on the ship's deck or hangs from the side, but what is the good of it if it will not hold when the wind blows and the vessel needs to be held fast? So, alas! there is much of religion and of godliness, so called, that is no good when it comes to the day of trial. The soldier is truly proved to be a soldier when the war-trumpet sounds and the regiment must go up to the cannon's mouth. Then shall you know, when the bayonets begin to cross, who has the true soldier's blood in him; but ah! how many turn back when it really comes to the conflict, for then the day of trial is too much for them!

They turned back *at the only time when they were of any sort of use.* A man who has to fight is not of any particular use to his country, that I know of, except when there is fighting to be done. Like a man in any other trade, there is a season when he is wanted. Now, if the Christian soldier never fights, of what good is he at all? That is a very remarkable passage in one of

the prophets, where the Lord compares his people to a vine, and then he says of them, in words of which I will give the sense, "If the vine bears fruit it is very valuable, but, if it bears no fruit, then it is good for nothing at all." An oak without fruit is valuable for its timber, and even thorns are useful, for you may make a hedge of them. Smaller plants may be used for some medicinal purposes, but the vine, if it bear no fruit, is absolutely good for nothing. "Will a man even make a peg of it, whereon to hang a vessel?" saith the prophet. No; it is of no service whatever. So is it with the Christian. If he be not thorough and true he is no good at all; you can make nothing of him whatever; he is, to use Christ's expressive words, "Neither fit for the land nor even for the dunghill, and men cast him out." Who would enlist a soldier that knew he would turn back? and who amongst us would like to be in his regiment? Take off his colours, play "The Rogue's March," and turn him out of the barracks! And this is what will come to some professors who turn back in the day of battle! Their regimentals will be torn off, and they will be excluded from the church of God because they turned back in the day of trial and at the time when they were needed.

They turned their backs, too, like fools, *in the day when victory was to be won.* The soldier wants to distinguish himself; he wants to rise out of the ranks; he wants to be promoted. He hardly expects an opportunity of doing this in time of peace; but the officer rises when in time of war he leads a successful charge. And so it is with the Christian soldier. I make no advance while I am not fighting. I cannot win if I am not warring. My only opportunity for conquering is when I am fighting. If I run away when there is a chance of winning the crown, then I am like the ship that does not come out of harbour when there is a fair wind, or like the man who does not avail himself of the high tide to get his vessel over the bar at the harbour's mouth. I cannot win without fighting, and there-

fore I thank God when the trial comes, and count it a joy when I fall into manifold temptations, because now I may add to my faith one virtue after another, till my Christian character is all complete. To throw away the time of conflict is to throw away the crown. Oh simple heart! Oh silly heart! to be afraid of suffering for Jesus! You are, in fact, afraid of reigning with him, for you must do the one if you would do the other. You, young woman, who are so alarmed at a little laughing, recollect you cannot go to heaven without being laughed at sometimes in the circle in which you move, or the family in which you live. He that will live a godly life in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. Since, then, this is the way to heaven, why do you turn from it? Be not like these children of Ephraim who turned back when there was a crown to be won.

They turned back, once more, *when turning back involved the most disastrous defeat.* The ark of God was taken. "Ichabod," the enemy cried, for the glory was departed from Israel, because the children of Ephraim turned back in the day of battle. And so, dear friends, unless God gives you preserving grace to stand fast to the end, do you not see that you are turning back to —what? *To perdition.* You do not turn back merely to the world. That is what it looks like, perhaps, to you, but you really turn back to hell. If, after having once put your hand to the plough, you look back, you are unworthy of the kingdom; but what are you worthy of? Why, those "reserved seats" in hell! Did you ever think of that? There are such, and let me quote a passage which proves it. We are told in one place of darkness "reserved" for some who were "wandering stars, for whom is *reserved* the blackness of darkness for ever!" When *you* turn back you turn back to those reserved places where the darkness is more black and the pain more terrible. Oh! may God save you from ever turning back in the day of battle! This, then, is when they did it—they turned back in the day of battle.

III. But now let us notice, WHO THEY WERE THAT TURNED BACK.

They were "children of Ephraim," and they are described as "being armed and carrying bows," or bows throwing forth sharp arrows. *They were men of a noble parentage.* They were the *children of Ephraim.* Joshua was of that line, and he was the greatest of conquerors, who led the people into the promised land. And you professors, you profess to be descended from our Joshua,—Jesus the Conqueror, and will you turn back? Are you followers of the Saviour who gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and are you afraid or ashamed of anything? He gave his face to be spat upon, and will you hide your faces at the mention of his name, because fools choose to laugh at you? Followers of Joshua, and yet afraid? Followers of Jesus, and yet blush? God grant that we may never blush, except when we think that we ever blushed at the thought of his Son! Oh! thou dear, despised, and persecuted One, I see thee on thy way amidst the scoffers. One plucks thy beard; another pulls thy hair; a third casts his accursed spittle into thy face; another beats thee; another cries, "Let him be crucified." They mock thee with all forms of mockery. Taunt and jeer they heap upon thee. They fill thy mouth with vinegar, and give thee gall to drink. They pierce thy hands and thy feet, and yet thou goest on along thy way of kindness and of mercy! And I—what have I ever suffered compared with thee? And these thy people—what have any of these endured, or what can they endure, compared with all thy griefs? Thy martyrs follow thee. Up from their fiery stakes they mount to their thrones. Confessors follow thee; from dungeons and from racks their testimony sounds. And, shall we, upon whom the ends of the earth are come, in these softer and gentler times, shall we turn back, and say we know not the Man? O God, forbid! but do thou keep us faithful unto thee, that we, the sons of Ephraim, may not turn back in the day of battle.

Then, again, *they were armed, and had proper weapons, weapons which they knew how to use, and good weapons for that period of warfare.* And as Christians, what weapons have we? Here is this "Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Here is a quiver, filled with innumerable arrows, and God has put into our hands the bow of prayer, by which we may shoot them, drawing that bow by the arm of faith against our innumerable foes. What weapons of holy warfare do you want better than those which this sacred armoury supplies? Read the last chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and see how the apostle, with a triumphant glorying, takes you through God's armoury, and bids you look at the various pieces of armour, and the various weapons that are provided for you. If you lose the battle, it is not for want of being armed, and if you desert from the ranks, it is not for the want of bows.

But what is more. Another translation seems to show that these Ephraimites were *very skilful in the use of the bow,* and yet they turned back. Oh! may God grant that none of us who have preached to others, and preached to others with fluency and zeal may ever have our own weapons turned against us. I may make a confession here now. I have read some of my own utterances and have trembled as I have read them, and afterwards I have wept over them, not wanting to alter them, not regretting them, but fearing and trembling lest I should have my own words used in judgment against me at the last great day, for there can be no more dreadful thing than for a man to have known and taught the Word to others, and then to hear the Master say,—just listen to it,—"Thou wicked servant! *Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee!*" O God! Condemn me out of anybody's mouth rather than out of my own. It will be a dreadful thing to have known how to use the bow, and yet not to win the victory one's-self; to have been a sort of drill-sergeant to God's people, showing them how to use the weapons, and then not to have fought the battle one's-self! This will be

a terrible thing! Some of you know how to use this Bible. You are acquainted with it, you have studied its doctrines, you know the points of divinity and theology, you are well read up in the teachings of God's Word; you know how to use the bow. And some of you pray very sweetly at prayer-meeting. Ah! beloved, what I said about myself may well apply to you. Some of you are Sunday-school teachers and others tract distributors, and you all know how to use the bow. I hope I can say to you who sit here that I have, like Saul, taught you to use the bow. We have sought to teach you young men to use God's Word both in prayer and in other exercises of your holy faith; but, beloved, if you turn back, the art which you have learned shall rise up in judgment against you to condemn you! If as professors taught the use of God's Word you are marched out to fight, but have not courage enough for the conflict, and turn your backs and slink into inglorious ease or into vain-glorious self-righteousness, or into false glorious pleasure, oh! how terrible must be your ruin at the last! May you not be like the children of Ephraim, who, though skilled in the use of the bow, yet turned back in the day of battle! This, then, is who they were.

IV. And ask ye now—WHY DID THEY DO IT?

Why did they, indeed? We might well have been at a loss to tell, for they were armed and carried bows. What then was the reason? The Word of God tells us and gives us three reasons. You will find them in the verses following the text. "They kept not the covenant of God and refused to walk in his law, and forgat his works, and his wonders that he had showed them."

"*They kept not the covenant.*" Oh! that great covenant," ordered in all things and sure," when you can fall back upon that how it strengthens you! When you can read in it eternal thoughts of divine love to you, and can hear Jesus say, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." How it encourages you to go

forward! You cannot be killed, you are invulnerable, you have been dipped in the covenant stream that makes you invulnerable from head to foot. Why, then, should you fear to face the foe? If you forget that covenant you will soon turn back, and so prove that you are not in it; but the remembrance of it gives strength to God's people to persevere, since they feel that God's purpose is that they shall persevere, and so win the victory. The covenant, however, not only secures safety, but it also provides all sorts of blessings. If a Christian always had his eye on the covenant storehouse he could never desert his God for the world. Will a man leave a treasury that is full of gold to go to a beggar's cottage for money? Will a man turn from the flowing stream that comes cool and fresh from Lebanon's melting snow to go and drink of some filthy stagnant pool? No, not he, and when a man knows the treasures of grace that are in Christ Jesus, and remembers that it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and that he hath made him a covenant for the people, will such a man turn back? Assuredly not, but every promise of the covenant will enable him to face his foes and prevent his turning back in the day of battle. Perhaps, however, the covenant which we forget is the covenant we feel we made with Christ in the day when we said, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," when we give ourselves up in a full surrender, body, soul, and spirit, to God. Oh! let us never forget that covenant! Supposing we should lose our character for Christ's sake? Did we not give Christ our character to begin with? You are of no use in the ministry, my dear brother, if you are not quite willing to be called a fool, to be called a thief, or even to be called a devil! You will never be successful if you are afraid of being pelted. The true minister often finds his pulpit to be a place but little preferable to a pillory, and he is content to stand there, feeling that all the abuse and blasphemy which may come upon him are only the means by which the world recognises and proves its recognition of a God-sent man.

Oh! to rest upon the covenant which is made in grace, and to hold fast the covenant which Christ has compelled us to make with him, resolved that even should he take all away, our joy, our comfort, and our ease, we will still stand to it, and still keep the covenant.

Another reason why they turned back was that "*they refused to walk in his law.*" When we get a proud heart we very soon get beaten, for with the face of a lion, but the heart of a deer, such an one is afraid of the world. If I am willing to do what God tells me, as he tells me, when he tells me, and because he tells me, I shall not turn back in the day of battle.

They also seem to have turned back *because they had bad memories.* "They forgat his works, and the wonders that he had showed them." My dear friends, we the members of this church have seen many of God's wonders, and have rejoiced in them, and if we were to forget these we should lack one means of comfort in our own darkness. Some of you have had very wonderful manifestations of the Lord's kindness, and if you forget all these I should not wonder if you should prove to be a mere professor and turn your back, for God's true people are like that Mary, whom all generations call "blessed," they treasure these things in their hearts. We ought to stir up our remembrances of God's loving-kindness, for if we do not it will soon be a powerful reason for our turning back in the day of battle. Oh! have we not fought in days gone by, and shall we now be afraid? Have we not slain old Giant Grim? Did we not fight with dragons and with lions? Have we not gone through the Valley of the Shadow of Death? Have we not had a conflict with Apollyon himself foot to foot, and shall Giant Despair or his wife Mrs. Diffidence make us afraid? No, in the name of God we will use the good old sword, the true Jerusalem blade that we wielded aforetime, and we shall yet again be more than conquerors through him that loved us. Let us, then, not forget God's works in the days of yore, lest we fail to

trust him in the days that are to come. This was why they turned back.

V. And now the last enquiry is—WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF THEIR TURNING BACK?

One result of their turning back was, *that their father mourned over them.* We are told, in the passage I quoted first, that "Ephraim their father mourned for them many days." What a lamentation it brings into the Christian church when a professor falls! There is one heart which feels it with peculiar poignancy—the heart of him who thought he was the spiritual father of the person so falling. There are no griefs connected with our work like the grief of mourning over fallen professors, especially if these happen to be ministers, men who are armed and carry bows, for when they turn back, well accoutred and well skilled in war, it is heart-breaking work indeed! I do not exaggerate, but I know I only speak the sober truth, when I say that if I could submit to any form of corporeal torture that I have ever heard of, I would be willing to bear it sooner than submit to the torture I have sometimes felt over members of this church, or what is worse, over young men educated in our College, or what is worse still, over ministers who have been for some time settled over their flocks. If at any time you desire to be malicious towards the man whom you look upon as your spiritual father; if you would send an arrow through his very liver and smite him with a dagger in the core of his heart, you have nothing to do but to turn back in the day of battle and you have done it. It were better that you had never been born than that you should go back to the world. It were better that you should be taken out of this house a corpse than that you should live to disgrace the profession which you have espoused, especially those of you who stand in a prominent place. O God, keep us who witness before the multitude, keep us by thine eternal power, keep us as the apple of thine eye, hide us beneath the shadow of thy wings, or else we who are chief and foremost, though armed and

carrying bows, shall yet turn back in the day of battle.

Another result, which you perhaps will think more important far, was that owing to their turning back *the enemy remained.* Owing to many Christians not doing what they ought to do in the day of battle, Romanism is still in this land, and infidelity is rife. If in the days of Elizabeth and Cranmer men had acted up to the light they then had, we should not be as we now are, a semi-Popish nation. Had Luther himself been faithful to some of the light to which he shut his eyes, he might have inaugurated a more perfect Reformation than that for which we are still devoutly grateful to God and for which we always cherish his memory. There was a want of thoroughness even in that day. And at the present moment, if some of our brethren were but faithful to their own convictions, they would not be bolstering up an alliance of the State with a depraved Church; they would not dare to perform some ceremonies which are atrociously bad, and many of us, if we acted according to our inward monitor, would not do many things which we are now doing. Oh! may God give us grace to smite the foe! What has sin to do in this world? Christ has bought the world with his blood, and oh! for grace to clear sin out of Christ's heritage! The earth is the Lord's, and the kingdoms thereof, the world and they that dwell therein; and if we were but faithful to God we should not turn back in the day of battle, and Rome and all our foes would be slain.

Then, again, if we did not turn our backs, *the country would be conquered for Christ.* I do not like the way in which some brethren say, that if we were more faithful half London would be saved. I say that I believe God's purpose is achieved, but still we are bound to speak of our sins according to their tendencies, and the tendency of our want of confidence in God, and our not boldly persevering, is to destroy souls. Paul talked once of destroying with meat him for whom Christ died, that

being the tendency to destroy such souls if they could be destroyed. So humanly speaking, the darkness of the world at present is owing to the unfaithfulness of the church, and if the church had been as true to Christ as she was in the first century, long ere this there would not have been a village without the gospel, nor a single empire in the world in which the truth had not been proclaimed. It is our turning back in the day of battle that leaves Canaan unconquered for our Lord.

But, worse than this, the *ark itself was actually taken.* My dear friends, those of you who are armed and carry bows, men of learning, men who understand the Scriptures, I do pray you, do not turn back just now, for just now seems to be a time when the ark of God will be taken. It can never really be so, but still we must mind that it be not the tendency of our actions. We are in great danger from what some people will not believe, but what is most certainly a fact, and that is the marvellous increase of Popery in this land. There are certain brethren who are always harping upon this one string, till we have grown sick of the theme, but, without at all endorsing their alarm, I believe there is quite enough for the most quiet and confident spirit to be alarmed at. The thing has become monstrous, and there is need to awaken the anxious care and the earnest efforts of God's church. You need not be long without good evidence of this. Every nerve is being strained by Rome to win England to itself, and, on the other hand, while we have less neology, and less of all sorts of scepticism throughout the whole country, I am afraid that we have more of it than we used to have inside the church itself. There are many doctrines that are now matters of question which I never heard questioned ten years ago. I am not altogether sorry for this, but rather glad, because there are some doctrines which are not preached now, but which will be preached more in future in consequence of doubts being thrown upon them. But it is a very ominous sign of the times, that most of those truths which we have been accustomed

to accept as being the received and orthodox faith of Christendom are now being questioned, and questioned too by men who are not to be despised, men who from their evident earnestness, from their deep knowledge, and from their close attention to the matter, deserve a hearing in the forum of common sense, even if they do not deserve it from spiritual men. We must all of us hold fast the truth now. If there is a man who has got a truth, let him draw his bow and shoot his arrows now, and not turn back in the day of battle. Now for your arrows! Now for your arrows! The more our foes shall conspire against Christ, the more do you make war against them. Give them double for their double; reward them as they reward you. Spare no arrows against Babylon. "Happy shall he be that taketh thy little ones and dasheth them against the stones." Happy shall he be who slays the little errors, who kills the minor falsehoods, who does battle against Popery in every shape and form, and against infidelity in all its phases! If we do not come to the front now, the ark of God, as far as we are concerned, will be taken!

And then, worst of all, *we shall hear the Philistines shouting while God's church is weeping!* The Philistines are good hands at shouting. They shout rather loudly about nothing, but when they get a little they bark loudly enough then. If they see but one Christian turn back what rejoicing there is! They ring the bells and make great mirth over the fall of the very least among us, but if those of us who are armed and carry bows should turn back in the day of battle, oh "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of Philistia rejoice, lest the sons of the uncircumcised triumph!" God grant that we may never make mirth for hell. If Satan must have merriment may he find it anywhere rather than in us. Oh! may we stand at last, and, having done all, may we still stand.

To conclude, brethren. If we do not stand fast, *you know what will come of it.* Supposing the churches of which we are members do not stand fast, what will come

of you and what of me? What became of Shiloh? What became of Ephraim? Instead of the ark being any longer in the custody of Ephraim it was taken away from Shiloh, and God transferred the custody of it to Judah, and it rested upon Mount Zion under the government of King David. So, mark you, whenever a church becomes unfaithful, and turns back in the day of battle, God takes away from it the keeping of his ark and entrusts it to others. "I have looked upon a neighbour of thine," saith he, "who is better than thou," and so he takes the sword and gives it to David, and thus perhaps may he do with us. There are many churches that were once flourishing but now are deserted altogether. So it may be with us individually, and with the churches at large unless we are faithful to God.

Now, I have said nothing to the unconverted. My drift seemed to be to speak to professing believers. Some of you say you never went to this war, and therefore you will not turn back; you never made a profession. Ah! dear friends, it will be a very poor excuse at the last great day to say, "I never made a profession." Did you ever hear of a thief being brought up at the Mansion House before the Lord Mayor who said, when he was accused of being a thief, "Why, my Lord, I am not a very honest man; I never professed to be; I never professed that I would not pick people's pockets; I never professed that I would not steal a watch if I had the chance; I was regularly known as a thief; I never professed to be anything else, therefore you cannot blame me." If a man should make such a defence as that, I should think it very likely that the Lord Mayor would give him an extra six months, and I think it would serve him very well right. You smile at this, but the very same argument may be applied to you. "Well," you say, "you know I do not make any profession of religion;" that is to say, you do not make any pretence of serving and loving the God who made you, who gave you life, and has kept and preserved you in it; you do not make any profession of being

washed in the precious blood of Christ; you do not make a profession of being on the road to hell. Well, may God save you from that excuse, and may he give you grace to look it in the face and say, "Well, I do not dare even to hope that I am saved; I know I am not." Then, my brother, if you are not saved, you are lost. I would like to stop while you turn that thought over, and when you have done so I would say, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

May God's eternal mercy seek and save you, and, if it be his will, may he find you, and lead you to put your trust in Jesus Christ, and resting upon him, and looking to his cross, you shall not, as the children of Ephraim did, "turn back in the day of battle."

A CALL TO WORSHIP.

"And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also."—ZECHARIAH viii. 21.

THIS prophecy may relate to the Jews literally, and it is by their learned doctors referred to the days of the Messiah. We believe, also, that it refers to the days of the Messiah, and we look for times when again the Holy Land shall be fully inhabited, and the people shall rejoice to meet together to worship the Lord their God. We do not see, however, that this prophecy has yet been accomplished, and we look for it to be fulfilled in the latter days. Spiritually it teaches just this, that when God returns to bless his church there are certain signs and marks of his return. Just as the coming back of the sun, when he advances north of the Equator, and again cheers us with his warmth, is marked by the upspringing of flowers and the singing of birds, so the return of God's Holy Spirit to bless his church is marked by certain signs and tokens. The text tells us what those signs and tokens are, but before I mention them let me suggest that every believer should pray that these cheering indications may be manifest in our midst, that in these our days the Lord may return unto his Jerusalem, and be jealous for her with a great jealousy, that we may see glad seasons such as our fathers have told us of, which happened in their days and in the old time before them. As far as shall lie in the ability of any one of us, may we help towards such revivals by our prayers, by our efforts, and by our consistent obedience to the

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gospel, and may the Lord visit us according to the desire of our hearts.

I. One of the first signs of God's presence among a people is that THEY TAKE GREAT INTEREST IN DIVINE WORSHIP. "The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts." It is clear from this that they no longer despise assemblies for worship, and no longer count divine service to be a weariness; but, on the contrary, they begin to value the means of grace, and desire to make good use thereof.

The first solemn assembly mentioned here is *the prayer-meeting*, and certainly one of the surest tokens of a visitation of God's Spirit to a community is their delighting to meet for prayer. The first cry of the people mentioned in our text was, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord." It is no statement of mine, suggested by unreasonable zeal, but it is the result of long-continued observation, when I assert that the condition of a church may be very accurately gauged by its prayer-meetings. If the spirit of prayer be not with the people, the minister may preach like an angel, but he cannot expect success. If there be not the spirit of prayer in a church there may be wealth, there may be talent, there may be a measure of effort, there may be an extensive machinery, but the Lord is not there. It is as sure evidence of the presence of God that men pray as the rising of the thermometer is an evidence of the increase of the temperature. As the Nilometer measures the rising of the water in the Nile, and so foretells the amount of harvest in Egypt; so is the prayer-meeting a grace-ometer, and from it we may judge of the amount of divine working among a people. If God be near a church it must pray; and if he be not there, one of the first tokens of his absence will be slothfulness in prayer.

God's people by their saying one to another, "Let us go speedily to pray," manifest that they have a sense of their needs; they feel that they want much, much that nature cannot yield them; they feel their need of

grace, their need of quickening, their need of God's help if sinners are to be converted, their need of his help if even those who are saved are to be steadfast, their need of the Holy Spirit that they may grow in grace and glorify God. He who never prays surely does not know his own needs, and how can he be taught of the Lord at all? God's people are a people sensible of their wants, and hence the absence of a sense of poverty is a sad token.

Moreover, the love which God's people have for prayer shows their desire after heavenly things. Those who frequently meet together for importunate, wrestling prayer, practically shew that they desire to see the Lord's Kingdom come; they are not so taken up with their own business that they cannot afford time to think of God's business, they are not so occupied with the world's pleasures that they take no pleasure in the things of God. Believers in a right state of heart value the prosperity of the church, and, seeing that it can only be promoted by God's own hand, they cry mightily unto the Lord of hosts to stretch out his hand of mercy and to be favourable to his church and cause. Church members who never pray for the good of the church, have no love for it; if they do not plead for sinners they have no love for the Saviour, and how can they be truly converted persons? Such as habitually forsake the assembling of themselves together for prayer may well suspect the genuine character of their piety. I am not, of course, alluding to those who are debarred by circumstances, but I allude to those who, from frivolous excuses, absent themselves from the praying assemblies. How dwelleth the love of God in them? Are they not dead branches of the vine? May they not expect to be taken away ere long?

Earnest meetings for prayer, indeed, not only prove our sense of need and our desire for spiritual blessings, but they manifest most practically our faith in the living God, and our belief that he hears prayer; for men will not continue in supplication if they do not believe that

God hears them: sensible men would soon cease their prayers, if they were not convinced that there is an ear which hears their petitions. Who would persevere in a vain exercise? Our united prayers prove that we know that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. We know that the Lord is able to work according to our desires, and that he is willing to be entreated of us. I have never known a thirsty man by a well, who would not use the bucket which was there ready to hand; unless indeed he was of opinion that the well was dry. I have never known a man who wanted wealth, and had a good trade at his foot, who would not exercise his trade; and so I have never known a man who believed prayer to be really effectual, and felt his great needs, who did not engage in prayer. It is an ill token to any community of Christians when prayer is at a low ebb, for it is clear evidence that they do not know their own need, they are not anxious about spiritual things, neither do they believe that God will enrich them in answer to their petitions. Beloved, may we never as a church deserve censure for neglecting prayer. Our meetings for prayer have excited general astonishment by their number, but they are not all they might be. I shall put it to the conscience of each one to say whether you are as prayerful as you should be. Did you ever hear of a church member who had not attended a prayer-meeting for a month? Do you know of church members who never assemble with the brethren so much as once in a quarter of a year? Do you know of any who have not been to the prayer-meeting in this place for the last six months? Do you know such? I will not say I know any such; I will do no more than hint that such people may exist; but if you know them will you give them my Christian love, and say that nothing depresses the pastor's spirit like the absence of church members from the public assemblies of prayer, and that if anything could make him strong in the Lord, and give him courage to go forward in the Lord's work, it would be if all of you were

to make the prayer-meeting your special delight. I shall be satisfied when I see our prayer-meetings as crowded as the services for preaching, and it strikes me if ever we be fully baptized into God's Spirit, we shall arrive at that point. A vastly larger amount of prayer ought to be among us than at present, and if the Lord visits us graciously he will set us praying without ceasing.

But next, these people also took an interest in meetings for instruction. I find that the Chaldee translates the second sentence, "Let us seek the doctrine of Jehovah of Hosts." The Lord's coming near to any people will be sure to excite in them a longing to hear the word. God sends impulses of enquiry over men's minds, and suddenly places of worship become crowded which were half empty before; preachers also who were cold and dead become quickened, and speak with earnestness and life. No doubt waves of religious movement pass over nations and peoples, and when God comes to a people the crest of that wave will be seen in this form, that the kingdom of heaven becomes an object of interest and men press unto it. During the revival under John the Baptist, the people went in crowds into the wilderness to hear the strange preacher who bade them repent. The revival under the apostles was marked by their everywhere preaching the word, and the people listening thereto. This was the great token of the Reformation; meetings were held under Gospel Oaks, out upon the commons and away in lone houses; and in glens and woods men thronged to listen to the Word of God. The processionals of popery were forsaken for the simple preaching of the truth. This also marked the last grand revival of religion in our own country under Whitfield and Wesley. The word of the Lord was precious in those days; and whether the gospel was preached among the colliers of Kingswood or the rabble of Kennington Common, tens of thousands were awakened, and rejoiced in the joyful notes of free grace. Men loved to hear the word: they said one to another, "Let us seek the Lord." It is said that Moorfields would be full of light on a dark

winter's morning at five o'clock when Mr. Whitfield was to preach, because so many people would be finding their way to the rendezvous, each one carrying a lantern: and so also over there in Zoar Street, in Southwark, when Mr. John Bunyan was out of prison and was going to preach, a couple of thousand would be assembled at five o'clock in the morning to enjoy his honest testimony. It is a token for good when people press to hear the word. I think we have in a measure the first token,—a love for prayer, but we want it far more; as for the second token, namely, an earnest love for listening to the word of God, we have that in abundance. See, ye not how the crowds rush in like a mighty torrent as soon as the doors are open to them.

Putting the two together, it seems that both these forms of meeting were loved by the people, because they sought salvation therein, or as the margin has it, they "entreated the face of the Lord." They came to pray with a view to be saved; they came to hear preachings with a view to divine favour; they wanted reconciliation with God; they had wandered from him, but now they sought him; they wanted fellowship with God: they had said to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" but now they said, "Reveal thyself unto us, O God, as thou dost not unto the world." They longed to promote God's glory, even as before they dishonoured him. Yes, when prayer-meetings and preaching-meetings shall be attended with this end and object,—that we may get near to God, and that we may glorify God, there shall be happy days indeed for us. Master Fox in his "Acts and Monuments," speaking of the time when the Reformation was breaking out, uses language something to this effect: "It was lovely to see their travels, earnest seekings, burning zeal, Bible readings, watchings, sweet assemblies, resort of one neighbour to another for conference and mutual confirmation:" and, he adds, "all which may make us now to blush for shame in these our days of free profession." We may take the good man's hint, and feel

shame for neglected opportunities, cold devotions, and disregard of the word of God. Our fathers loved to meet for prayer, and to hear the preaching of the truth; and when they came together it was with an intensely earnest desire to obtain the divine blessing. To get this they risked life and liberty, meeting even when fine and imprisonment, or perhaps the gallows might be their reward. O to see the like earnestness among ourselves as to the means of grace! May the Lord Jesus send it to us by the working of his Holy Spirit.

II. Another sign of God's visiting a people in mercy is that THEY STIR EACH OTHER UP TO ATTEND UPON THE MEANS OF GRACE, for "the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, let us go speedily to pray before the Lord;" that is to say, they did not merely ask one another to go if they casually met; they did not bring in the subject accidentally if they could do so readily in common conversation; but the inhabitants of one city went to another on purpose to exhort them. They made a journey about it. As men go to market, from town to town, so did these people try to open a market for Christ; and not only one messenger, but many of the inhabitants of one city went on purpose all the way to another city, with set design, to induce them to join in worship, saying, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord." They put themselves out of the way to do it. They had such a desire that great numbers might come together to worship the Most High, that they took much trouble to invite their neighbours. God will be with us, indeed, if each one of us shall be anxious to bring others to Jesus, and to that end shall try to bring them to hearken to the word of God.

Why were these men so earnest? The reply will be, they persuaded others to come to the meetings for worship, out of love to God's house, to God's cause, and to God's self. God's house is honoured and beautified when great numbers come together. The ways of Zion do mourn and languish when but few assemble for prayer. Christ has promised to be where two or three are met

together in his name ; still it is not helpful to comfortable fellowship for a mere handful to meet in a large house. We feel like sparrows alone on the house-top when such is the case. A great space and only a sprinkling of people to occupy it is like a big barn with only one bundle of straw in it, the winds howl in and out of it very miserably. I am sure if any of you attend a place of worship where there are very few beside yourselves, you must feel unhappy ; and if you do not, why surely your hearts cannot be in the right place. Warm hearts are not easily kept alive among empty pews. A coal must be very lively to burn alone, but many glowing coals laid together help to keep each other alight. No one can doubt, moreover, that full houses give opportunity to the preacher to glorify God. It is hopeful work to throw the net where there are great shoals of fish. Where men are hearing, we may hope that God will be blessing, and hence earnest Christians love to see the aisles and seats crowded. Besides, God is glorified when great numbers come together with earnest minds to celebrate his worship. In early days, in the Jewish Church, the men of Israel did not come by twos and threes and meet together in scant numbers, but from all parts of Judea's land, north, south, east, and west, they came together in companies, singing through the glades of the forest, singing through the dells, and singing over the hills ; and when they reached the city of Jerusalem in their hundreds of thousands, their praise was a great shout, like the voice of thunder, and the smoke of their sacrifices rose up in clouds to heaven. Those were grand days. Does not David seem to relish the service of the Lord his God all the more because of the multitude that kept holy day ? Hence, the saints love to see many come to pray and to listen to the word, because the multitude honours the house, and God thus honours God himself. O brethren, we think the cause is sadly declining when hearers are like the gleanings of the vintage, when service time comes and sees vacant seats by the score, because professors shrink at the weather, or hunt up an

excuse for staying at home, being too idle, too indifferent to cross the threshold of their houses, unless some eloquent preacher or fresh comer shall attract them; but we reckon that God's cause prospers when the people come joyfully in their bands to listen to the truth, and God's Spirit applies it to their hearts with power, leading them to prayer and praise.

Moreover, believers love to bring others to the House of God, because they wish to do good to them. Did you ever notice how the little birds, when they find a heap of corn, begin to chatter and twitter as if they would call all the other birds to come and feast also? Grace is generous, and is never akin to churlish Nabal. Misers would fain keep all their wealth to themselves, but a man who is rich in faith, feels his happiness increased when others have faith too. As soon as we drink of the water of life, a sacred instinct within us bids us cry, "Come." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." He knows not the grace of God who has no desire that others should know it also. Thou wilt assuredly long for the souls of others if God has saved thy soul. Natural humanity, let alone our alliance to the divine nature, leads us to bid others come to Christ.

Besides, the love of company in the Christian makes him invite his neighbours to gospel worship. Believers are like sheep in this among other things, namely, that they are gregarious. A man who loves to keep his religion to himself, must surely be a stranger to the religion of Christ. Communion is one of the sweetest joys of the spirit. Fellowship with saints above will be one jewel of our everlasting crown, and fellowship with saints below is one of the sweetest cordials of our mortal cares. "I went to the House of God in company," saith David, as if it made the house so much the sweeter to go in company with others who went there. "I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the House of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day." For the sake of communion we long to see many going upon the heavenly pilgrimage.

Observe in our text, there does not appear to have been any minister or missionary employed to go from one city to another, and to say, "Let us go and pray," but the inhabitants themselves undertook the duty of invitation and persuasion, and said, "Let us go and pray unto the Lord." The people themselves attended to mutual provocation to love and to good works. How I wish they did so now! They did not wait for the exhortations of one specially set apart to be a prompter, and a remembrancer; but their own hearts were so warm that they did it spontaneously among themselves. My brethren, may you thus be pastors to one another; there are far too many of you for me to look after personally, therefore I pray you be stirrers of one another up to every good word and work. I believe that when a man stirs others up it is good for himself, for a man cannot in common decency be very cold himself who bids others be warm; he cannot surely, unless he be an arrant hypocrite, be negligent of those duties which he bids others attend to. Beloved, I commit this charge to you, and then I have done with this point. This morning I ask you to visit one another, and to say, "Come, let us not as a church lose the presence of God after nearly twenty years' enjoyment of it: let not our minister's hands grow weak by our neglect of prayer; let not the work of the church flag through our indifference; but let us make a brotherly covenant that we will go speedily to pray before the Lord and seek the Lord of Hosts, that we may retain his presence and have yet more of it, to the praise of the glory of his grace."

III. I must pass on to notice that it appears from our text that it is a sure mark of God's visiting a people when THEY ARE URGENT TO ATTEND UPON THESE HOLY EXERCISES AT ONCE. The text says, "Let us go *speedily* to pray;" by which is meant, I suppose, that when the time came to pray, they were punctual, they were not laggards; they did not come into the assembly late they did not drop in one by one long after the service had begun, but they said, "Let us go *speedily*." They

looked up to their clocks and said, "How long will it take us to walk so as to be there at the commencement? Let us start five minutes before that time lest we should not be able to keep up the pace, and should by any means reach the door after the first prayer." I wish late comers would remember David's choice. You remember what part he wished to take in the house of God: he was willing to be a doorkeeper, and that not because the doorkeeper has the most comfortable berth, for that is the hardest post a man can choose, but he knew that doorkeepers are the first in and the last out, and so David wished to be first at the service and the last at the going away. How few would be of David's mind! It has been said that Dissenters in years gone by placed the clock outside the meeting-house, so that they might never enter late, but the modern Dissenters place the clock inside, that their preachers may not keep them too long. There is some truth in the remark, but it is not to our honour. This was, however, a fault with our forefathers, for quaint old Herbert said—

> "O be drest,
> Stay not for th' other pin: why thou hast lost
> A joy for it worth worlds."

Let us mend our ways and say one to another in the language of the text, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord." Let us go with quick feet. If we go slowly to market, let us go quickly to meeting; if we are slow on week days, let us go quickly on the Sabbath. Let us never keep Jesus Christ waiting, and we shall do so if we are not in time, for he is sure to be punctual, even if only two or three are met together in his name.

The expression, however, means more than this. "Let us go speedily" means, let us go heartily: do not let us crawl to prayer, but let us go to it as men who have something before them which attracts them. When the angels serve God they never do it as though they were half asleep. They are all alive and burning like flames of fire. They have six wings, and, I warrant

you, they use them all. When the Lord saith, "Gabriel, go upon my bidding," he outstrips the lightning. Oh, to exhibit some such ardour and zest in the service of God. If we pray, let us pray as if we meant it: if we worship, let us worship with all our hearts. "Let us go speedily," and may the Lord make our hearts to be like the chariots of Ammi-nadib for swiftness and rapidity; glowing wheels and burning axles may God give to our spirits, that we may never let the world think we are indifferent to the love of Jesus. "Let us go speedily."

The words, "Let us go speedily" mean—let us go at once, or instantly. If any good thing has been neglected, and we resolve to attend to it better, let us do it at once. Revivals of religion,—when is the best time for them? Directly. When is the best time to repent of sin? To-day. When is the best time for a cold heart to grow warm? To-day. When is the season for a sluggish Christian to be industrious? To-day. When is the period for a backslider to return? To-day. When is the time for one who has crawled along the road to heaven to mend his pace? To-day. Is it not always to-day? And, indeed, when should it be? "To-morrow," say you. Ah, but you may never have it; and, when it comes, it will still be to-day. To-morrow is only in the fool's almanack: it exists nowhere else. To-day, to-day, let us go speedily. I beseech the Church of God here to be yet more alive, and at once to wake up. Time is flying—we cannot afford to lose it. The devil is wide awake, why should we be asleep? Error is stalking through the land, evil influences are abroad everywhere; men are dying, hell is filling, the grave is gorged and yet is insatiable, and the maw of destruction is not yet satisfied; shall we lie down in wicked satisfaction, yielding to base supineness? Awake, arise, ye Christians! now, even now, lest it be said of you, "Curse ye Meroz, saith the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." I know we are all apt to think that we live in the most important era

of history; and I admit that under certain aspects every day is a crisis, but I claim liberty to say that there never was a period in the world's history when Christian activity, and prayerfulness, and genuine revival were more needed than just now. Where is our nation? Is it not on the very verge of becoming once again a province of the Pope's dominion? Are not the modern Pharisees compassing sea and land to make proselytes? Does it not seem as if the people were gone mad upon their idols, and were altogether fascinated by the charms of the whore of Babylon, and drunken with her cup? Do you not see everywhere the old orthodox faith forsaken, and men occupying Christian pulpits who do not believe, but even denounce the doctrines which they have sworn to defend? Might I not say of Christendom in England, that "her whole head is sick and her whole heart faint"? The daughter of Zion staggers in the street for weakness: there is none to help her among all her sons; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies. Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper. Her Nazarites were purer than snow, and their separation from the world was known of all men, but now they are defiled with worldliness until they are blacker than a coal. From the daughter of Zion her beauty is departed. O ye that love her, let your bowels sound as a harp for her! O ye that love her, weep day and night for her halting, for except the Lord return unto her the time of her sore distress draweth nigh. Thus saith the Lord, "Arise, cry out in the night season, pour out your hearts like water before the Lord, and then the Lord will return and be gracious to his inheritance."

IV. For a moment I shall call your attention to another point. When God visits a people they will not only attend to prayer and preaching, and stir each other up to do so at once, but THEY WILL HAVE A SPECIAL EYE TO GOD IN THESE DUTIES. Observe, they shall say, "Let us go speedily to pray *before the Lord*, and to seek *the Lord of hosts*." Alas, many go to religious meetings

to be seen of men. I am afraid there is a great deal too much exhibition of dress in some quarters, and there certainly cannot be a greater abomination than to make the house of God a show-room for our finery. Jesus might say, "Take these things hence. It is written my house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it an exhibition wherein to display yourselves." Some go to worship because it is the custom, and it would not be respectable to stay away. "We must have a pew in church," you know, "or we should be remarked upon in society." I am glad that people attend divine worship for any reason, but mere custom is a poor motive, and is no sign of grace. The people in the text did not say, "We will go that we may see our neighbours, and that our neighbours may see us." No: they went to "pray before the Lord." They did not assemble to seek a man; they did not go to hear Mr. So-and-so preach. Of course they would sooner hear one who preached all the gospel, and preached it plainly, than another who preached half the gospel and fired over their heads; but still, they looked through the man to the man's Master, and they did not think that the Master was tied up to any one man. May we cultivate in our midst the desire to worship for God's sake, not for the preacher's sake, whoever he may be. I believe it is not wrong for a Christian man to feel that he is better fed by one minister than by another, and therefore to be most glad when God's servant is in the pulpit; but if that feeling grows so that if he cannot hear his favourite preacher he will stay at home, it is most mischievous. I thank God that my Master has other preachers besides Paul; there is Apollos, there is Cephas, and beyond these I see a great company of them that publish the good news. I will hear what God will speak through them.

I would have you note, beloved, how different is my text from that formal worship into which it is so easy to fall. "I have been to the prayer-meeting. I have done my duty, and I can go home satisfied. I have taken a seat at the tabernacle and listened to two ser-

mons on the Sunday, and I feel I have done my duty." Oh, dear hearer, that is a poor way of living. I want a great deal more than all that, or I shall be wretched. At the prayer-meeting I must see God, I must pour out my soul before him; I must feel that the spirit of prayer has been there, and that I have participated in it, otherwise, what was the good of my being there? I must, when in the assembly on the Sabbath day, find some blessing to my own soul; I must get another glimpse of the Saviour; I must come to be somewhat more like him; I must feel my sin rebuked, or my flagging graces revived; I must feel that God has been blessing poor sinners and bringing them to Christ; I must feel, indeed, that I have come into contact with God, or else what is my Sunday worth, and what is my having been in the assembly worth? If God shall bless you, indeed, you will worship spiritually, and you will count nothing to be true worship which is not of the spirit and of the heart and soul. May God quicken us all up to that point, and he shall have the praise.

V. The last thing is this: it is a blessed sign of God's visiting a people when EACH ONE OF THEM IS RESOLVED, PERSONALLY, THAT HE WILL, IN A SPIRITUAL MANNER, WAIT UPON GOD. Notice the last four words. "*I will go also.*" "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: *I will go also.*" That is the point—"I will go also." The Christian man should neither be content, when he goes to worship, to leave others behind, nor should he be content to drive others before him and stop behind himself. It is said of Julius Cæsar that he owed his victories to the fact that he never said to his soldiers, "Go," but always said, "Let us go." That is the way to win. Example is mightier than precept. We read of the Pharisees of old that they laid burdens on other men's shoulders, but they themselves did not touch them with one of their fingers: true Christians are not so. They say, "I will go also." Was not that bravely spoken of poor old Latimer, when he was to be burnt with Ridley.

Ridley was a younger and stronger man, and as he walked to the stake, old Latimer, with his quaintness about him to the last, cried to his brother Ridley, "Have after, as fast as my poor old legs can carry me." The dear old saint was marching to his burning as fast as he could; not at all loath to lay his aged body upon the altar for his Lord. That is the kind of man who makes others into men; the man who habitually says, "I will go also; even if I am called to be burned for Christ. Whatever is to be done or suffered, I will go also." I would be ashamed to stand here and say to you, "Brethren, pray; brethren, preach; brethren, labour," and then be an idler myself; and you also would be ashamed to say to others, "Let us pray; let us be earnest," while you are not praying and not earnest yourselves. Example is the backbone of instruction. Be thyself what thou wouldst have others be, and do thyself what thou wouldst have others do.

"I will go also," because I need to pray as much as anybody else. I will go to hear the word, for I need to hear it as well as others; I will go and wait upon God, for I need to see his face. I will cry to him for a blessing, for I want a blessing. I will confess my sin before him, for I am full of it. I will ask mercy through the precious blood of Jesus, for I must have it or perish. "I will go also." If nobody else will go, I will go; and if all the rest go I will go also. I do not want to pledge any of you this morning; I shall not, therefore, ask you to hold up your hands, but I should like to put it very personally to all the members of this church. We have enjoyed the presence and blessing of God for many years in a very remarkable manner, and it is not taken from us; but I am jealous,—I believe it is a godly jealousy and not unbelief,—lest there should be among us a slackness in prayer, and a want of zeal for the glory of God, and a neglecting of the souls of our neighbours, and a ceasing to believe to the full in our mission and in the call of God to be each one of us in this world as Christ was, saviours of others. My breth-

ren, knit together as we are in church fellowship, and bound by common cords to one blessed Master, let each one say within himself, "I will go also"; the church shall be the subject of my prayer; the minister shall share in my petitions; the Sabbath school shall not be forgotten; the College shall be remembered in supplication; the Orphanage shall have my heart's petitions; I will plead with God for the evangelists; I will consider the congregation at the Tabernacle, and pray that it may gently melt into the church; I will pray for the strangers who fill the aisles and crowd the pews that God will bless them; yea, I will say unto God this day, "My God, thou hast saved me, given me a part and lot among thy people, and put me in thy garden, where thy people grow and flourish; I will not be a barren tree, but abound in fruits, especially in prayer: if I cannot do anything else I can pray; if this be my one mite, I will put that into the treasury; I will put thee in remembrance, and plead with thee, and give thee no rest, until thou establish thy cause and make it praise in the earth." I am not asking more of you than Jesus would ask, nor do I exact anything at your hands: you will cheerfully render that which is a tribute due to the infinite love of your Lord. Now, do not say, dear brother, "I hope the church will wake up." Leave it alone, and mind that you wake up yourself. Do not say, "I hope they will be stirred up this morning." Never mind others! Stir up yourself. Begin to enquire, "Which prayer-meeting shall I go to, for I mean to join the people of God, and let them hear my voice, or at least have my presence; and if I cannot go to the Tabernacle I will drop in near my own house; and if there is no meeting there I will open my own house: the largest room of my cottage shall be used for a prayer-meeting, or my parlour if I have one. I will have a share in the glorious work of attracting a blessing from the skies; I will send up my electric rod of prayer into the clouds of blessing to bring down the divine force." Do it; do it! Let each one say, "I will go also." May God bless this

word to his people, and I am sure it will result in benediction to sinners. For, remember, you ungodly ones, that all this noise is about you. What we want the blessing of God for, is that you may be saved. We cannot bear that you should remain as you are, unconverted, and I am asking God's people to pray specially with an eye to your salvation. Shall *we* think about your souls, and will you not think about them yourselves? Are we inclined to move heaven and earth that you might be saved, and will you sit still and perish? May the Lord awaken you to say, "If others are going to pray unto the Lord, and seek his face, I will go also"; and the Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

LOVE'S CROWNING DEED.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."—JOHN XV. 13.

I HAVE lately in my ministry very much detained you in the balmy region of divine lovingkindness. Our subjects have frequently been full of love. I have, perhaps, repeated myself, and gone over the same ground again and again, but I could not help it; my own soul was in a grateful condition, and therefore out of the abundance of the heart the mouth hath spoken. Truly I have little reason to excuse myself, for the region of love to Christ is the native place of the Christian; we were first brought to know Christ and to rest in him through his love, and there, in the warmth of his tenderness, we were born to God. Not by the terrors of justice, nor the threats of vengeance, were we reconciled, but grace drew us with cords of love. Now, we have sometimes heard of sickly persons, that the physician has recommended them to try their native air, in hopes of restoration; so we also recommend every backsliding Christian to try the native air of Christ's love, and we charge every healthy believer to abide in it. Let the believer under decays of grace go back to the cross again; there he found his hope, there he must find it again: there his love to Jesus began,—we "love him because he first loved us,"—and there must his love be again inflamed. The atmosphere around the cross of Christ is bracing to the soul; get to think much of his love and you grow strong and vigorous in grace. As the dwellers in the low-lying

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Alpine valleys become weak and full of disease in the close, damp atmosphere, but soon recover health and strength if they climb the hill-side and tarry there, so in this world of selfishness, where every man is fighting for his own, and the mean spirit of caring only for one's own self reigns predominant, the saints become weak and diseased, even as worldlings are; but up on the hill-sides, where we learn Christ's self-denying, disinterested affection to the sons of men, we are braced to nobler and better lives. If men are ever to be truly great they must be nurtured beneath the wing of free grace and dying love. The grandeur of the Redeemer's example suggests to his disciples to make their own lives sublime, and both furnishes them with motives for so doing and with forces to constrain them thereto.

Moreover, we may well tarry for many a day in the region of the love of Christ, because not only is it our native region and full of bracing influences, but it has an outlook towards the better shore. As shipwrecked mariners upon a desert island have been known to linger most of the day upon that headland which pushes farthest out into the main ocean, in the hope that, perhaps, if they cannot catch a glimpse of their own country across the waves, they may possibly discern a sail which had left one of the ports of the well-beloved land; so it is that while we are sitting on the headlands of divine love we look across to heaven, and become familiar with the spirits of the just. If ever we are to see heaven while yet we are tarrying here, it must surely be from Cape Cross or Mount Fellowship; from that jutting piece of holy experience of divine love which runs away from the ordinary thoughts of men, and approaches the heart of Christ. There at any rate do I long to sit for many an hour, till the eternal day shall break, and the shadows flee away, and I shall dwell with all the chosen in the land where there is no more sin; for if there can be found a heaven below, it is where heaven came down from heaven to die for sinful men, that sinful men might go up to heaven to live eternally.

Our subject this morning, then, is divine love, and we have chosen the highest hill in all the goodly land for you to climb; we shall take you to-day to love's most sacred shrine, to the Jerusalem of the holy land of love, to the Tabor of love, where it was transfigured, and put on its most beautiful garments, where it became indeed too bright for mortal eye fully to gaze upon it, too lustrous for this dim vision of ours. Let us come to Calvary where we find love stronger than death, conquering the grave for our sakes.

We shall speak, first, upon *love's crowning act:* "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;" but, then, since the text, grand as it is, and high, so that we cannot attain unto it, yet seems to fall short of the great argument, though it be one of the Master's own sayings, we shall speak upon *the sevenfold crown of Jesus' love;* and when we have so done, we shall have some *royal things* to say, which befit the place whereon we stand when we are gathered at the cross-foot.

I. First, then, LOVE'S CROWNING DEED. There is a climax to everything, and the climax of love is to die for the beloved one. "Free grace and dying love" are the noblest themes among men, and when united they are sublimity itself. Love can do much, can do infinite things, but greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. This is the *ultima thule* of love; its sails can find no further shore, its deeds of self-denial can go no further. To lay down one's life is the most that love can do.

This is clear if we consider, first, that when a man dies for his friends, it proves *his deep sincerity.* Lip-love, proverbially, is a thing to be questioned; too often is it a counterfeit. Love which speaks can use hyperbolical expressions at its will, but when you have heard all you can hear of love's speech, you are not sure that it is love; for all are not hunters that blow the horn, all are not friends who cry up friendship. Much there is among men of a feeling which wears all the likeness of that priceless thing called love, which is more precious

than the gold of Ophir, and yet for all that, as all is not gold that glitters, so it is not all love that walketh delicately and feigneth affection. But a man is no liar when he is willing to die to prove his love. All suspicion of insincerity must then be banished. We are sure he loves who dies for love. Yea, it is not bare sincerity that we see in such a case, we see *the intensity of his affection.* A man may make us feel that he is intensely in earnest when he speaks with burning words, and he may perform many actions which may all appear to show how intense he is, and yet for all that he may but be a skilful player, understanding well the art of simulating that which he does not feel: but when a man dies for the cause he has espoused, you know that his is no superficial passion, you are sure that the core of his nature must be on fire when his love consumes his life; if he will shed his blood for the object beloved, there must be blood in the veins of his love, it is a living love. Who can question the solemn vehemence of a man's love when he passes through the sepulchre, and yields his soul up for the thing he professes to love? So that "greater love hath no man than this," because he can give no greater proof of the sincerity and intensity of his affection than to lay down his life for his friends.

And, again, *it proves the thorough self-abnegation of the heart* when the man risks life itself for love. Love and self-denial for the object loved go hand-in-hand. If I profess to love a certain person, and yet will neither give my silver nor my gold to relieve his wants, nor in any way deny myself comfort or ease for his sake, such love is contemptible; it wears the name, but lacks the reality of love: true love must be measured by the degree to which the person loving will be willing to subject himself to crosses and losses, to sufferings and self-denials. After all, the value of a thing in the market is what a man will give for it, and you must estimate the value of a man's love by that which he is willing to give up for it. What will he do to prove his affection? What will he suffer for the sake of benefitting his be-

loved? Greater love for friends hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for them. Even Satan acknowledged the reality of the virtue which would lead a man to die, when he spake concerning Job to God: he made little of Job's losing his sheep, and his cattle, and his children, and remaining patient; but he said, "Skin for skin; yea all that a man hath will he give for his life; but put forth now thine hand, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." So if love could give up its cattle and its land, its outward treasures and possessions, it would be somewhat strong, but comparatively it would fail if it could not go further, and endure personal suffering, ay, and the laying down of life itself. No such failure occurred in the Redeemer's love. Our Saviour stripped himself of all his glories, and by a thousand self-denials proved his love; but the most convincing evidence was given when he gave up his life for us. "Hereby perceive we the love of God," says the apostle John, "because he laid down his life for us"; as if he passed by everything else which the Son of God had done for us, and put his finger upon his death and said, "*Hereby* we perceive the love of God towards us." It was majestic love that made the Lord Jesus lay aside "his tire and rings of light," and lend their glory to the stars, strip off his azure mantle and hang it on the sky, and then come down to earth to wear the poor, mean garments of our flesh and blood, in which to toil and labour like ourselves; but the masterpiece of love was when he would even put off the garment of his flesh, and yield himself to the agonies superlative of death by crucifixion. He could go no further; self-abnegation had achieved its utmost; he could deny himself no more, when he denied himself leave to live.

Again, beloved, the reason why death for its object is the crowning deed of love is this, that *it excels all other deeds*. Jesus Christ had proved his love by dwelling among his people as their brother, and participating in their poverty as their friend, till he could say, "Foxes

have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay my head"; he had manifested his love by telling them all he knew of the Father, unveiling the secrets of eternity to simple fishermen; he showed his love by the patience with which he bore with their faults, never harshly rebuking but only gently chiding them, and even that but seldom; he revealed his love to them by the miracles he wrought on their behalf, and the honour which he put upon them by using them in his service; indeed, there were ten thousand princely acts of the love of Jesus Christ towards his own, but none of them can for a moment endure comparison with his dying for them,—the agonising death of the cross surpasses all the rest. These life-actions of his love are bright as stars, and, like the stars, if you gaze upon them they will be seen to be far greater than you dreamed, but yet they are only stars compared with this clear, blazing sun of infinite love which is to be seen in the Lord's dying for his people on the bloody tree.

Then, I must add that his death *did in effect comprehend all other acts*, for when a man lays down his life for his friend he has laid down everything else. Give up life, and you have given up wealth—where is the wealth of a dead man? Renounce life, and you have relinquished position—where is the rank of a man who lies in the sepulchre? Lay down life, and you have forsaken enjoyment—what enjoyment can there be to the denizen of the charnel-house? Giving up life, you have given up all things, hence the force of that reasoning, "He that spared not his own Son but freely delivered him up for us all, how will he not with him also freely give us all things?" The giving of the life of his dear Son was the giving of all that his Son was; and as Christ is infinite, and all in all, the delivering up of his life was the concession of all in all to us: there could be nothing more.

Beloved, I speak but too coldly upon a theme which ought to stir my soul first, and yours afterwards. Spirit

of the living God, come like a quickening wind from heaven, and let the sparks of our love glow into a mighty furnace-flame just now, even now, if it may so please thee!

Beloved, we now remark that for a man to die for his friends is evidently *the grandest of all proofs of his love in itself*. The words glide over my tongue, and drop from my lips very readily—"lay down his life for his friends," but do you know or feel what the words mean? To die for another! There be some who will not even give of their substance to the poor; it seems like wrenching away a limb for them to give a trifle to God's poor servants; such people cannot guess what it must be to have love enough to die for another, any more than a blind man can imagine what colours can be like: such persons are out of court altogether. There have been loving spirits who have denied themselves comfort and ease, and even common necessaries, for the sake of their fellow men, and such as these are in a measure qualified to form an idea of what it must be to die for another; but still none of us can fully know what it means. To die for another! Conceive it! Concentrate your thoughts upon it! We start back from death, for under any light in which you may place it, human nature can never regard death as otherwise than a terrible thing. To pass away into the glory-land is so bright a hope that death is swallowed up in the victory, but the death itself is a bitter thing, and therefore needs to be swallowed up in the victory, before we can bear it. It is a bitter pill, and must be drowned in a sweet potion ere we can rejoice in it. I am certain that no person, apart from sweet reflections of the presence of God and the heavenly future, could regard death otherwise than as a dreadful calamity. Even our Saviour did not regard his approaching death without trembling; the thought of dying was not in itself otherwise than saddening even to him; witness the bloody sweat as it streamed from him in Gethsemane, and that manlike putting away of the cup with, "If it be possible let this cup pass from

me." As you think of that soul-conflict let it increase your idea of the Godlike love which took the cup with both his hands resolutely, and drank right on, and never stayed its dreadful draught till the Lord had drank damnation dry for all his people, swallowing up their deaths in his own most comprehensive death. It is no light thing to die. We speak too flippantly of death, but dying is no child's-play to any man, and dying as the Saviour died, in awful agonies of body and tortures of soul, it was a great thing indeed for his love to do. You may surround death if you please with luxury, you may place at the bedside all the dear assuagements of the tenderest love, you may alleviate pain by the art of the apothecary and the physician, and you may decorate the dying couch with the honour of a nation's anxious care, but death, for all that, is in itself no slight thing, and when borne for others it is the masterpiece of love.

And so, closing this point of love's crowning action, let me say that *after a man has died for another, there can be no question raised about his love.* Unbelief would be insane if it should venture to intrude itself at the cross-foot, though, alas, it has been there, and has there proved its utter unreasonableness. If a man dies for his friend, he must love him, nobody can question that; and Jesus dying for his people must love them: who shall cast a doubt upon that fact? Shame on any of God's children that they should ever raise questions on a matter so conclusively proven! yet, as if the Lord Jesus knew that even this masterpiece of love might still be intruded upon by unbelief, he rose again from the dead, and rose with his love as fresh as ever in his heart, and went to heaven leading captivity captive, his eyes flashing with the eternal love that brought him down. He passed through the pearly gates, and rode in triumph up to his Great Father's throne, and though he looked upon his Father with love ineffable and eternal, he gazed upon his people too, for his heart was still theirs. Even at this hour, from his throne among the

seraphim, where he sits in glory, he looketh down upon his people with pitying love and condescending grace.

> "Now, though he reigns exalted high,
> His love is still as great;
> Well he remembers Calvary,
> Nor let his saints forget."

He is all love, and altogether love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

II. THE SEVEN CROWNS OF JESUS' DYING LOVE are our second point. I hope I shall have your interested attention while I show that above that highest act of human love there is a something in Christ's death for love's sake still more elevated. Men's dying for their friends—this is superlative, but Christ's dying for us is as much above man's superlative as that could be above mere commonplace. Let me show you this in seven points.

The first is this—*Jesus was immortal*, hence the special character of his death. Damon is willing to die for Pythias; the classic story shows that each of the two friends was anxious to die for the other. But suppose Damon dies for Pythias, he is only antedating what must occur, for Damon must die one day, and if he lays down his life for his friend, say ten years before he otherwise would have done so, still he only loses that ten years' life, he must die sooner or later; or if Pythias dies and Damon escapes, it may be that only by a few weeks one of them has anticipated his departure, for they must both die eventually. When a man lays down his life for his friend, he does not lay down what he could keep altogether; he could only have kept it for a while, even if he had lived as long as mortals can, till grey hairs are on their head, he must at last have yielded to the arrows of death. A substitutionary death for love's sake in ordinary cases would be but a slightly premature payment of that debt of nature which must be paid by all. But such is not the case with Jesus.

Jesus needed not die at all; there was no ground or reason why he should die apart from his laying down his life in the room and place and stead of his friends. Up there in the glory was the Christ of God for ever with the Father, eternal and everlasting; no age passed over his brow; we may say of him, "Thy locks are bushy and black as the raven, thou hast the dew of thy youth." He came to earth and assumed our nature that he might be capable of death, yet remember, though capable of death, his body need not have died; as it was it never saw corruption, because there was not in it the element of sin which necessitated death and decay. Our Lord Jesus, and none but he, could stand at the brink of the grave and say, "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." We poor mortal men have only power to die, but Christ had power to live. Crown him, then! Set a new crown upon his beloved head! Let other lovers who have died for their friends be crowned with silver, but for Jesus bring forth the golden diadem, and set it upon the head of the Immortal, who never needed to have died, and yet became a mortal, yielding himself to death's pangs without necessity, except the necessity of his mighty love.

Note, next, that in the cases of persons who have yielded up their lives for others they may have entertained, and probably did *entertain the prospect that the supreme penalty would not have been exacted from them.* They hoped that they might yet escape. Damon stood before Dionysius, the tyrant, willing to be slain instead of Pythias; but you will remember that the tyrant was so struck with the devotion of the two friends that he did not put either of them to death, and so the proffered substitute escaped. There is an old story of a pious miner, who was in the pit with an ungodly man at work. They had lighted the fuse, and were about to blast a piece of rock with the powder, and it was necessary that they should both leave the mine before the

powder exploded; they both got into the bucket, but the hand above which was to wind them up was not strong enough to draw the two together, and the pious miner, leaping from the bucket, said to his friend, "You are an unconverted man, and if you die your soul will be lost. Get up in the bucket as quickly as you can; as for me, I commit my soul into the hands of God, and if I die I am saved." This lover of his neighbour's soul was spared, for he was found in perfect safety arched over by the fragments which had been blown from the rock: he escaped. But, remember well that such a thing could not occur in the case of our dear Redeemer. He knew that if he was to give a ransom for our souls he had no loophole for escape, he must surely die. Die he or his people must, there was no other alternative. If we were to escape from the pit through him, he must perish in the pit himself; there was no hope for him, there was no way by which the cup could pass from him. Men have risked their lives for their friends bravely; perhaps had they been certain that the risk would have ended in death they would have hesitated; Jesus was certain that our salvation involved death to him, the cup must be drained to the bottom, he must endure the mortal agony; and in all the sufferings of death extreme he must not be spared one jot or tittle; yet deliberately, for our sakes, he espoused death that he might espouse us. I say again, bring forth another diadem! Set a second crown upon that once thorn-crowned head! All hail, Immanuel! Monarch of misery, and Lord of love! Was ever love like thine! Lift up his praises, all ye sons of song! Exalt him, all ye heavenly ones! Ay, set his throne higher than the stars, and let him be extolled above the angels, because with full intent he bowed his head to death. He knew that it behoved him to suffer, it behoved that he should be made a sacrifice for sin, and yet for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame.

Note a third grand excellency in the crowning deed of

Jesus' love, namely, that *he could have had no motive in that death but one of pure, unmingled love and pity.* You remember when the Russian nobleman was crossing the steppes of that vast country in the snow, the wolves followed the sledge in greedy packs, eager to devour the travellers. The horses were lashed to their utmost speed, but needed not the lash, for they fled for their lives from their howling pursuers. Whatever could stay the eager wolves for a time was thrown to them in vain. A horse was loosed: they pursued it, rent it to pieces, and still followed, like grim death. At last a devoted servant, who had long lived with his master's family, said, "There remains but one hope for you; I will throw myself to the wolves, and then you will have time to escape." There was great love in this, but doubtless it was mingled with a habit of obedience, a sense of reverence to the head of the household, and probably emotions of gratitude for many obligations which had been received through a long course of years. I do not depreciate the sacrifice, far from it; would that there were more of such a noble spirit among the sons of men! but still you can see a wide difference between that noble sacrifice and the nobler deed of Jesus laying down his life for those who never obliged him, never served him, who were infinitely his inferiors, and who could have no claims upon his gratitude. If I had seen the nobleman surrender himself to the wolves to save his servant, and if that servant had in former days tried to be an assassin and had sought his life, and yet the master had given himself up for the undeserving menial, I could see some parallel, but as the case stands there is a wide distinction. Jesus had no motive in his heart but that he loved us, loved us with all the greatness of his glorious nature, loved us, and therefore for love, pure love, and love alone, he gave himself up to bleed and die.

"With all his sufferings full in view,
And woes to us unknown,
Forth to the task his spirit flew,
'Twas love that urged him on."

Put the third crown upon his glorious head! Oh angels, bring forth the immortal coronet which has been stored up for ages for him alone, and let it glitter upon that ever blessed brow!

Fourthly, remember, as I have already begun to hint, that in our Saviour's case *it was not precisely, though it was, in a sense, death for his friends.* Greater love hath no man than this towards his friends that he lay down his life for them; read the text so, and it expresses a great truth: but greater love a man may have than to lay down his life for his friends, namely, if he dies for his enemies. And herein is the greatness of Jesus' love, that though he called us "friends," the friendship was all on his side at the first. He called us friends, but our hearts called him enemy, for we were opposed to him. We loved not in return for his love. "We hid as it were our faces from him, he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Oh the enmity of the human heart to Jesus! There is nothing like it. Of all enmities that have ever come from the pit that is bottomless, the enmity of the heart to the Christ of God is the strangest and most bitter of all; and yet for men polluted and depraved, for men hardened till their hearts are like the nether millstone, for men who could not return and could not reciprocate the love he felt, Jesus Christ gave himself to die. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good (benevolent) man one could even dare to die, but God commendeth his love to us in that while we were yet sinners in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

> "O love of unexampled kind!
> That leaves all thought so far behind;
> Where length, and breadth, and depth, and height,
> Are lost to my astonished sight."

Bring forth the royal diadem again, I say, and crown our loving Lord, the Lord of love; for as he is King of kings everywhere else, so is he King of kings in the region of affection.

I shall not, I hope, weary you when I now observe

that there was another glorious point about Christ's dying for us for *we had ourselves been the cause of the difficulty which required a death.* There were two brothers on board a raft once, upon which they had escaped from a foundering ship. There was not enough of food, and it was proposed to reduce the number that some at least might be able to live. So many must die. They cast lots for life and death. One of the brothers was drawn, and was doomed to be thrown into the sea. His brother interposed and said, "You have a wife and children at home; I am single, and therefore can be better spared, I will die instead of you." "Nay," said his brother, "not so; why should you? the lot has fallen upon me;" and they struggled with each other in mutual arguments of love, till at last the substitute was thrown into the sea. Now, there was no ground of difference between those two brothers whatever; they were friends, and more than friends. They had not caused the difficulty which required the sacrifice of one of them, they could not blame one another for forcing upon them the dreadful alternative; but in our case there would never have been a need for any one to die if we had not been the offenders, the wilful offenders; and who was the offended one, whose injured honour required the death? I speak not untruthfully if I say it was the Christ that died who was himself the offended one. Against God the sin had been committed, against the majesty of the divine Ruler; and in order to wipe the stain away from divine justice it was imperative that the penalty should be exacted and the sinful one should die. So he who was offended took the place of the offender and died, that the debt due to his own justice might be paid. It is the case of the judge bearing the penalty which he feels compelled to pronounce upon the culprit. Like the old classic story of the father who on the judgment bench condemns his son to lose his eyes for an act of adultery, and then puts out one of his own eyes to save an eye for his son, the judge himself bore a portion of the penalty. In our case, he who

vindicated the honour of his own law, and bore all the penalty, was the Christ who loved those who had offended his sovereignty, and grieved his holiness. I say again —but where are the lips that shall say it aright?—bring forth, bring forth a new diadem of more than imperial splendour, to crown the Redeemer's blessed head anew, and let all the harps of heaven pour forth the richest music in praise of his supreme love.

Note again that there have been men who have died for others, but they have *never borne the sins of others;* they were willing to take the punishment, but not the guilt. Those cases which I have already mentioned did not involve character. Pythias has offended Dionysius, Damon is ready to die for him, but Damon does not bear the offence given by Pythias. A brother is thrown into the sea for a brother, but there is no fault in the case. The servant dies for his master in Russia, but the servant's character rises, it is in no degree associated with any fault of the master, and the master is, indeed, faultless in the case. But here, ere Christ must die, it must be written, "He was numbered with the transgressors, and he bore the sin of many." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "He made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "He was made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Now, far be it from our hearts to say that Christ was ever less than perfectly holy and spotless, and yet there had to be established a connection between him and sinners by the way of substitution, which must have been hard for his perfect nature to endure. For him to be hung up between two felons, for him to be accursed of blasphemy, for him to be numbered with transgressors, for him to suffer, the just for the unjust, bearing his Father's wrath as if he had been guilty, this is wonderful, and surpasses all thought! Bring forth the brightest crowns and put them on his head, while we pass on to weave a seventh chaplet for that adorable brow.

For remember, once more, the death of Christ was a proof of love superlative, because in his case *he was denied all the helps and alleviations which in other cases make death to be less than death.* I marvel not that a saint can die joyously; well may his brow be placid, and his eye be bright, for he sees his heavenly Father gazing down upon him and glory waiting him. Well may his spirit be rapt in joy, even while the death-sweat is on his face, for the angels have come to meet him, and he sees the far-off land, and the gates of pearl growing nearer every hour. But ah, to die upon a cross without a pitying eye upon you, surrounded by a scoffing multitude, and to die there appealing to God, who turns away his face, to die with this as your requiem, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" to startle the midnight darkness with an "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani" of awful anguish such as never had been heard before: this is terrible. The triumph of love in the death of Jesus rises clear above all other heroic acts of self-sacrifice! Even as we have seen the lone peak of the monarch of mountains rise out from all adjoining alps and pierce the clouds to hold familiar converse with the stars, so doth this love of Christ soar far above aught else in human history, or that can be conceived by the heart of man. His death was more terrible, his passing away more grievous by far. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down such a life in such a fashion, and for such enemies so utterly unworthy. Oh, I will not say, Crown him—what are crowns to him? Blessed Lamb of God, our hearts love thee, we fall at thy feet in adoring reverence, and magnify thee in the silence of our souls.

III. Lastly, and I must be very brief, as my time has fled, MANY ROYAL THINGS OUGHT TO BE SUGGESTED TO US BY THIS ROYAL LOVE.

And first, dear brethren, how this thought of Christ's proving his love by his death ennobles self-denial. I do not know how you feel, but I feel utterly mean when I think of what Christ has done for me. To live a life of

comparative ease and enjoyment shames me. To work to weariness seems nothing. After all, what are we doing compared with what he has done? Those who can suffer, who can lay down their lives in mission fields, and bear hardships, and poverty, and persecution for Christ,—my brethren, these are to be envied, they have a portion above their brethren. It makes us feel ashamed to be at home and to possess any comforts when Jesus so denied himself. I say the thought of the Lord's bleeding love makes us think ourselves mean to be what we are, and makes us nothing in our own sight, while it causes us to honour before God the self-denial of others, and wish that we had the means of practising it.

And oh, how it prompts us to heroism. When you get to the cross you have left the realm of little men: you have reached the nursery of true chivalry. Does Christ die?—then we feel we could die too. What grand things men have done when they have lived in the love of Christ! That story of the Moravians comes to my mind, and I will repeat it, though you may often have heard it, how in the South of Africa there was, years ago, a place of lepers, into which persons afflicted with leprosy were driven. There was a tract of country surrounded by high walls, from which none could escape. There was only one gate, and he who went in never came out again. Certain Moravians looked over the wall and saw two men: one, whose arms had rotted off with leprosy, was carrying on his back another who had lost his legs, and between the two they were making holes in the ground and planting seeds. The two Moravians thought, "They are dying of a foul disease by hundreds inside that place, we will go and preach the gospel to them." "But," they said, "if you go in, you can never come out again; there you will die of leprosy too." They went in, and they never did come out till they went home to heaven; they died for others for the love of Jesus. Two others of these holy men went to the West Indian Islands, where there was an

estate to which a man could not go to preach the gospel unless he was a slave, and these two men sold themselves for slaves, to work as others worked, that they might tell their fellow slaves the gospel. Oh, if we had that spirit of Jesus among us we should do great things. We want it back, and must have it. The church has lost everything when she has lost her old heroism; she has lost her power to conquer the world when the love of Christ no longer constrains her.

But mark how the heroic in this case is sweetly tinctured and flavoured with gentleness. The chivalry of the olden times was cruel; it consisted very much in a strong fellow cased in steel going about and knocking others to pieces who did not happen to wear similar suits of steel. Now-a-days we could get a good deal of that courage back, I dare say; but we shall be best without it. We want that blessed chivalry of love in which a man feels, "I would suffer any insult from that man if I could do him good for Christ's sake, and I would be a door-mat to my Lord's temple gate, that all who come by might wipe their feet upon me, if they could honour Christ thereby." The grand heroism of being nothing for Christ's sake, or anything for the church's sake, that is the heroism of the cross; for Christ made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. O blessed Spirit, teach us to perform like heroic acts of self-abnegation for Jesus' name's sake!

And, lastly, there seems to my ears to come from the cross, a gentle voice that saith, "Sinner, sinner, guilty sinner, I did all this for thee, what hast thou done for me?" and yet another which saith, "Return unto me! Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." I wish I knew how to preach to you Christ crucified. I feel ashamed of myself that I cannot do better than I have done. I pray the Lord to set it before you in a far better way than any of my words can. But, oh, guilty sinner, there is life in a look at the Redeemer!

Turn now your eyes to him, and trust him! Simply by trusting him, you shall find pardon, mercy, eternal life, and heaven. Faith is a look at the Great Substitute. God help you to get that look for Jesus' sake. Amen.

"FOR EVER WITH THE LORD."

"To be with Christ; which is far better."—PHILIPPIANS i. 23.

THE apostle was confined in the guard-room of the Prætorium. It is very probable that he had a soldier chained to his right hand, and another to his left, and it is very possible that this position suggested to him the expression, "I am in a strait betwixt two." He was literally held by two forces, and he was mentally in the same condition, exercised with two strong desires, influenced by two master passions, and he did not know to which he should yield. He says, "Between the two I am in perplexity," or, as some render it, "I am straitened by the pressure of the two things." Picture yourself sitting in a gloomy dungeon, a captive in the hands of the cruel tyrant Nero, and under the supervision of the infamous præfect Tigellinus, the most detestable of all Nero's satellites. Conceive yourself as expecting soon to be taken out to death—perhaps to such a horrible death as the refined cruelty of the monster had often devised—as, for instance, to be smeared over with bituminous matter and burned in the despot's garden, to adorn a holiday. What would be your feelings? If you were not a Christian I should expect you to tremble with the fear of death, and even if you were a believer, I should not marvel if the flesh shrunk from the prospect. Paul was an utter stranger to any feeling of the kind. He had not the slightest dread of martyrdom. He calls his expected death a departure, a loosing of the cable which holds his ship to the shore, and a putting forth upon the main ocean. So far from being afraid to die,

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he stands fully prepared, he waits patiently, and even anticipates joyfully the hour when his change shall come. On the other hand, I can readily imagine that amidst the miseries of a wretched prison, subject to frequent insults from a rude soldiery, you might be seized with a desire to escape from life. Good men have felt the power of that feeling. Elijah said, "Let me die: I am no better than my fathers." Job sighed to be hidden in the grave, and oftentimes under far less afflictions than those which vexed the apostle, good men have said, "Would God this life were at an end, and these miseries over; I am a-weary, I am a-weary; when will death release me?" I see nothing of that feeling in the apostle; he is not restive under the chain; there is not a trace of impatience about him. He admits, and joyfully admits it, that to be with Christ is far better; but upon consideration he sees reasons for his remaining here, and therefore he cheerfully submits to whatever may be the Lord's will. He does not choose, his mind is so wrapt up with God, and free from self, that he cannot choose. What a blessed state of heart to be in! One might be willing to wear Paul's chain on the wrist to enjoy Paul's liberty of mind. He is a freeman whom the Lord makes free, and such a man Nero himself cannot enslave. He may confine him in the military prison, but his soul walks at liberty through the earth, yea, and climbs among the stars. Paul, instead of being either weary of life or afraid of death, sits down and coolly considers his own case, as calmly indeed as if it had been the case of some one else. Do you observe how he weighs it? He says, to depart and to be with Christ is, in itself considered, far better, he therefore desires it; but looking round upon the numerous churches which he had formed, which in their feebleness and exposure to many perils needed his care, he says, on the other hand, "To abide in the flesh is more needful for you." He holds the balance with unquivering hand, and the scales quietly vibrate in equilibrium: one rises and then the other, gently swaying his heart by turns.

He is in a strait, a blessed strait betwixt two, and he does not say that he knew not which of two things to avoid, or which to deprecate, but his mind was in such a condition that either to live or to die seemed equally desirable, and he says, "What I shall *choose* I wot not." It is a poor choice, to choose to live in a dungeon, and an equally poor business, as men judge it, to choose to die, but the apostle regards both of them as choice things, so choice that he does not know which to select. He deliberates as coolly and calmly as if he were not at all concerned about it: and indeed it is fair to say he was not at all concerned about it, he was moved by a higher concern than any which had to do with himself, for his main object was the glory of God. He desired the glory of God when he wished to be with Christ, he desired the same when he was willing to remain with Christ's people, and to labour on.

His mind, as we have seen, hung in an equilibrium between two things, but he is clear enough upon one matter, namely, that considering his own interests only, it would greatly increase his happiness to depart and to be with Christ. He had said the same before, when he declared that, "To die is gain." He had no doubt that to be loosed from the body and suffered to fly away to Jesus, would be a great boon to him. Of that assurance we will now speak.

I. The first thing to which I shall call your attention is THE APOSTLE'S CERTAINTY CONCERNING THE DISEMBODIED STATE:—"Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." Now, the apostle was an eminently conscientious man. At the time when he was a Jewish teacher, whatever else he might not be, he was very conscientious—he verily thought that he did God service in persecuting the Christians; and throughout the whole of his subsequent career, in every incident of his history we mark him as pre-eminently a man guided by conscience. If he believed a thing to be right, he attended to it; and if anything struck him as being wrong, he could not be persuaded to coun-

tenance it. He would not do or say that which he did not fully believe to be right and true. It is a grand thing to meet with a witness of this order, for his testimony can be relied on. What such a man affirms we may be quite certain is correct, so far as he knows.

And withal, the apostle was eminently cool. He was a man of well-balanced reason. I should think that logic greatly preponderated amongst his faculties. John has a warm and glowing heart, and one does not wonder that he is rather a warm lover of Jesus than a systematic unfolder of doctrine; Peter is impulsive, and when he writes he writes with force, but it is not the force of reasoning. Paul is calm, collected; you never find him excited beyond the bounds of reason. He is as orderly, correct, and argumentative as a Grecian sage. He is enthusiastic to a white heat, but withal he still holds himself well in hand. The coursers of his imagination can outstrip the wind, but he always holds the reins with a strong hand, and knows how to turn them, or to make them stand still at his pleasure. It is a great thing to receive the testimony of a man who is both conscientious to tell what he believes to be true, and calm and logical to form a clear judgment as to what is really fact.

Now this man, Paul, was convinced that there is a future state for believers, he was quite sure about it, and he believed it to be a future conscious state, which commenced the moment they died, and was beyond measure full of blessedness. He did not believe in purgatorial fires through which believers' souls must pass; much less did he believe the modern and detestable heresy which some have broached, that like the body the soul of the saint dies until the resurrection; but he was wont to speak of being "absent from the body and present with the Lord," and here he speaks about departing not to sleep or to lie in the cold shade of oblivion till the trumpet should arouse him, but to depart and immediately to be with Christ, which is far better. What had made this very conscientious and very collected

man come to this conclusion? I suppose he would have replied first, that he had been converted by a sight of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the road to Damascus, while desperately set against the religion of Jesus, the Lord himself had appeared to him, so that he had seen Jesus with his own eyes, and had heard him speak. About that sight and sound he had no question: he was sure that he had seen the Lord Jesus and heard his voice. He was so certain of this that he was led to give up his position in society, which was a very elevated one, to lose his repute, which he greatly valued, to be rejected by his countrymen whom he loved with more than ordinary patriotism, and to run continual risk of death for the sake of the truth to which he was a witness. He was content to be made the offscouring of all things for the love of that once despised Saviour who, out of the windows of heaven, had looked down upon him in mercy. Now, he was quite sure that Jesus Christ came from somewhere, and went back to some place or other. He felt sure that there must be a place where the man Jesus Christ dwelt, and he felt quite certain that wherever that might be it would be a place of happiness and glory. Recollecting the prayer of the Lord Jesus, which John had recorded, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," he was quite certain that as soon as saints died they would be where their glorious Lord Jesus was, and would share his honours.

Remember, also, that this judicious and truthful witness tells us that he had on other occasions distinct evidence of the disembodied state. He informs us that he was caught up into the third heaven, and there heard things which it was not lawful for a man to utter. He observes that he does not understand how he went there, but of the fact he is quite sure. His body was here on earth still alive, and yet his spirit was caught away into heaven; the question with him was, whether he was in the body or out of the body, and I dare say his metaphysical mind often tried to untie that knot.

His soul must have remained in the body to keep the body alive, and if so, how could it go up to heaven; and yet into heaven he was quite clear that he had entered. At last the apostle came to the conclusion that whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell, but God knew. This, however, he was sure of, that he had been caught up into paradise, or the third heaven, and therefore there was a paradise; he had heard words which it was not possible for him to utter, therefore there was a place where glorious words were to be heard, and glorious words to be said, and he was quite sure, not merely as a matter of belief, but as a matter of observation, that there was a place into which disembodied spirits go, where they are with Jesus, their Lord, which is far better. It is clear that it would not be far better for a saint to die and sleep till the resurrection than it would be to work on here. It would be evidently by far a better thing for saints to continue in life till Christ came, than to lie dormant in oblivion; yet he says it is far better for them to depart, and the ground of his judgment lies in the fact that there is a place of real happiness, of intense joy, where it is far better for the disembodied spirit to be than for it to remain here in the body. About this Paul expressed no sort of doubt. There was such a state; it was a state of great joy, so that even to him who was one of the greatest apostles, the most useful of the saints, and the most honoured with his Master's blessing—even to him to depart and to be with Christ, would be far better.

I want you also to notice that he does not express any sort of doubt about his own entrance into a state of felicity so soon as he should depart. He does not say, as I am afraid some here would have done, "It would be far better, certainly, for me to die if I were sure I should then be with Christ." Oh, no; he had risen above such hesitation. Dear brethren, it is a wretched state to be in to be saying, "It would be sweet for me to depart if, indeed, these glories were for me." He had got beyond all doubt as to whether eternal bliss

would be his; he was sure of that, and why are we not sure, too? Why do we hesitate where he spoke so confidently? Had Paul something to ground his confidence upon which we have not? Do you suppose that Paul reckoned he should be saved because of his abundant labours, his earnest ministry, and his great successes? Far from it; know ye not what he himself said, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"? As for anything that he had ever done, he declared that he trusted to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which was of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith. Now, where Paul built we build, if we build aright; our hope is founded upon the righteousness of Christ, upon the grace of God, upon the promise of our heavenly Father. Well, I dare to say it, he, the chief of the apostles, had not a solitary grain of advantage over any one of us as to the basis and essence of his hope. Mercy, grace, atoning blood, the precious promise; these alone he built on, for other foundation can no man lay. If Paul was sure of eternal bliss, I would be sure of it too; nay, I am; are you, beloved? Are you equally as sure of being with Christ as Paul was? You should be, for you have the same reason for certainty as the apostle had, if indeed you are believing in the Lord Jesus. God is not a God of perhapses, and ifs, and buts, but he is a God of shalls and wills, of faithful truth and everlasting verities. "He that believeth on him is not condemned." "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of"—what? Paul, the apostle? No, but "of God's elect"? Of all of them, of any one of them whom you shall please to select, however humble, however obscure; they are all safe in Jesus. He is made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, and we may, each one of us, cry, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have com-

mitted to him until that day." So much, then, concerning the apostle's certainty as to the disembodied state, its happiness, and his own possession of it before long.

II. It is very interesting to notice THE APOSTLE'S IDEA OF THAT STATE. He says, "To be with Christ." It is a one-sided idea, and it is almost a one-worded description of it. "To be with Christ." I have no doubt Paul had as enlarged ideas as to what the state of disembodied spirits would be as the most intelligent and best read Christian that ever lived. I have no doubt he would have said, "Yes, there is fellowship among the saints: we shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven: it will be certainly as true in heaven as it is on earth that we have fellowship one with another." I have no doubt, he believed that heaven was a place of a far clearer knowledge than any we possess below: he said so once—"Here I know in part, but there shall I know even as I am known." Some Christians have entertained the idea that they shall gaze upon the various works of God in distant parts of his universe, and enjoy infinite happiness in beholding the manifold wisdom of God—very possible, and if it will conduce to their happiness—very probable. Perhaps Paul believed all that, but we do not know whether he did or not. Here it is plain that he gives us only one idea. He was a man of great mind and much information, but here he gives us only one idea—for my part, one that perfectly satisfies me, and I think one which charms and fills to overflowing the heart of every believer. He describes the disembodied state as "to be with Christ." A very exclusive idea! No, a very inclusive idea—for it takes in all the heaven which the largest mind can conceive. It does seem to omit a great many things, but I dare say Paul felt that they were such trifles that it did not matter about forgetting them.

Being with Christ is so great a thing that he mentioned it alone. I think he did this first, because his

love was so concentrated upon Christ that he could think of nothing else in connection with going away to heaven. There is a wife here, perhaps, and her husband has accepted an appointment in India. He has been long away, and the years of his forced absence have been weary to her. She has had loving messages from him and kind letters, but often has she sighed, and her heart has looked out of the windows towards the east, yearning for his return; but now she has received a letter entreating her to go out to her husband, and without hesitation she has resolved to go. Now, if you ask her what she is going to India for, the reply will be, "I am going to my husband." But she has a brother there. Yes, she will see him, but she does not tell you that; her great thought is that she is going to her husband. She has many old friends and companions there, but she is not drawn to the far-off land by desire for their company, she crosses the sea for the sake of her beloved. But her husband has a handsome estate there, and he is wealthy, and has a well-furnished house and many servants. Yes, but she never says, "I am going out to see my husband's home," or anything of that kind. She is going to her husband. That is the all-absorbing object. There may be other inducements to make the voyage, but to be with her beloved is the master object of her journey. She is going to the man she loves with all her soul, and she is longing for the country, whatever that country may be, because he is there. It is so with the Christian, only enhanced in a tenfold degree. He does not say, "I am going to the songs of angels, and to the everlasting *chorales* of the sanctified," but, "I am going to be with Jesus." It would argue unchastity to Christ if that were not the first and highest thought. To come back to the figure—and it is one which Christ himself would approve of, for he continually uses the metaphor of marriage in relation to himself and the soul—if that woman did regard as the first thing in that journey out to the East, the sight of some other person, or the mere enjoyment of wealth and possessions, it

would argue that she had little love to her husband, that she was not such a wife as she ought to be. And if it could be so that the Christian should have some higher thought than being with Christ, or some other desire worth mentioning in the same day with it, it would look as if he had not presented himself as a chaste virgin to Christ, to be his and his alone. I see, therefore, why Paul calls the disembodied state a being with Christ, because his love was all with his Lord.

And, no doubt, there was this further reason amongst others—he was persuaded that heaven could not be heaven if Christ was not there. Oh, to think of heaven without Christ! It is the same thing as thinking of hell. Heaven without Christ! It is day without the sun; existing without life, feasting without food, seeing without light. It involves a contradiction in terms. Heaven without Christ! Absurd. It is the sea without water, the earth without its fields, the heavens without their stars. There cannot be heaven without Christ. He is the sum total of bliss; the fountain from which heaven flows, the element of which heaven is composed. Christ is heaven and heaven is Christ. You shall change the words and make no difference in the sense. To be where Jesus is is the highest imaginable bliss, and bliss away from Jesus is inconceivable to the child of God. If you were invited to a marriage feast, and you were yourself to be the bride, and yet the bridegroom were not there—do not tell me about feasting. In vain they ring the bells till the church tower rocks and reels, in vain the dishes smoke and the red wine sparkles, in vain the guests shout and make merry: if the bride looks around her and sees no bridegroom, the dainties mock her sorrow and the merriment insults her misery. Such would a Christless heaven be to the saints. If you could gather together all conceivable joys, and Christ were absent, there would be no heaven to his beloved ones. Hence it is that heaven is to be where Christ is.

> To dwell with Christ, to feel his love,
> Is the full heaven enjoyed above;

And the sweet expectation now,
Is the young dawn of heaven below.

And, beloved, just to be with Christ is heaven—that bare thing. Excuse my using such words; I only want to make the sense the stronger. That bare thing, just to be with Christ is all the heaven a believer wants. The angels may be there or not, as they will, and the golden crowns and harps present or absent as may be, but if I am to be where Jesus is, I will find angels in his eyes, and crowns in every lock of his hair; to me the golden streets shall be my fellowship with him, and the harpings of the harpers shall be the sound of his voice. Only to be near him, to be with him—this is all we want. The apostle does not say, "to be in heaven, which is far better:" no, but, "to be with Christ; which is far better," and he adds no description; he leaves the thoughts just as they are, in all their majestic simplicity. "To be with Christ; which is far better."

But what is it to be with Christ, beloved? In some sense we are with Christ now, for he comes to us. We are no strangers to him. Even while we are in this body we have communion with Jesus; and yet it must be true that a higher fellowship is to come, for the apostle says, that while we are present in the body we are absent from the Lord. There is a sense in which, so long as we are here, we are absent from the Lord; and one great saint used to say upon his birthday that he had been so many years in banishment from the Lord: to abide in this lowland country, so far from the ivory palaces, is a banishment at the very best. All that we can see of Christ here is through a glass darkly; face to face is true nearness to him, and that we have not reached as yet.

What will it be, then, to be with Christ? Excuse me if I say it will be, first of all, exactly what it says, namely, to be with him. I must repeat that word—it is heaven only to be with him. It is not merely what comes out of being with him, his company itself is heaven. Why, even to have seen Jesus in his flesh was a privilege:—

"I think when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How he took little children like lambs to his fold,
I should like to have been with him then.
I wish that his hands had been placed on my head,
That his arms had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen his kind look when he said,
'Let the little ones come unto me.'"

I think I should have found a little heaven in gazing on that blessed form. But our text speaks of a different sort of being with him, for there were people near him here in body who were a long way off from him in spirit. The text speaks of being with him in the spirit when the soul shall have shaken itself loose of the flesh and blood, and left all its slough behind it, and gone right away, to bask in the glory of Jesus, to participate in the nature of Jesus; and, best of all, to abide near to his person, with the God-man Mediator, who is Lord of all.

Still, there will flow out of that nearness the following things among many others. We shall enjoy, first of all, a clearer vision of him. Oh, we have not seen him yet! Our views of him are too dim to be worth calling sights. The eyes of faith have looked through a telescope and seen him at a distance, and it has been a ravishing vision; but when the eyes of the soul shall really see him—him, and not another, him for ourselves, and not another for us, oh, the sight! Is not the thought of it a burning coal of joy? The sight of his very flesh will charm us, his wounds still fresh, the dear memorials of his passion still apparent. The perception of his soul will also delight us, for our soul will commune with his soul, and this is the soul of communion. The sight of his Godhead, so far as created spirit can see it, will also ravish us with joy.

And then we shall have a brighter knowledge of him. Here we know in part—we know the names of his offices, we know what he has wrought, we know what he is working for us; but there those offices will shine in their splendour, and we shall see all that he did for us in its real weight and value; we shall comprehend then

the height and depth, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, as we do not know it at this hour.

And with that will come a more intimate intercourse. Our soul will lean her head on Jesus' bosom, our heart will get into his heart and hide herself in his wounds. What must it be to speak to him as our soul will speak to him, as our spirit nature will commune with his inmost nature, his spirit speaking to our spirits, without a veil between! We shall not see him looking down from the windows, but we shall rest in his arms, in a far more intimate intercourse than any we can enjoy this side the grave. To-day I see him through the grating of my prison-windows, and my heart is ready to leap out of my body; what will it be when his left hand shall be under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me?

And then, beloved, when we shall be with him it will be unbroken fellowship. There will be no sin to blind our eyes to his charms, or to entice us away from his love. Blessed be God, there will be no Monday mornings to recall us to the world, but our sacred Sabbath will last on for ever. Doubts, backslidings, and spiritual chills will then be gone for ever. No more shall we cry, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" but we shall hold him, and never let him go. There will be no need even for the spirit to fall asleep, and so suspend its joy; it will find its true rest in constant communion with Jesus. It is possible to live in fellowship with Jesus here always; possible, but, oh, how few ever reach it! but there we shall all have reached it, the very lowest amongst us, and we shall be with the Lord for ever.

And then we shall have a sight of his glory, and though I put this after a sight of himself, yet, remember, our Lord thinks much of it. He prayed, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." We have seen something of his shame, and have been partakers in the reproach that is poured upon his gospel; but we shall see him then with silver sandals on the

feet that once were mired by the clay of earth, and a crown of gold upon the once thorn-pierced brow. We shall see him when his hands shall gleam as with gold rings set with beryl, and look no more like a malefactor's hand nailed to the cruel wood. Then shall we say—

His body's like bright ivory
With sapphires overlaid,
His limbs like marble pillars
In golden sockets stayed.

Then looking on his face we shall understand Solomon's Song, when he said, "His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars; his voice is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely." One would wish to leap right away out of this body to behold him in his glory.

And then, beloved, we shall share in the glory too, for his joy will be our joy, his honour will be our honour. Our spirits which wrestled hard here below, and had to strive against a thousand outward enemies, and inward doubts and fears, will then be all light, and joysome, and gladsome, full of the life of God, and beaming with ecstatic bliss. The Lord grant us to know this in due season, and so we shall if, indeed, we are believers in Jesus. So you see Paul's one idea was that he should be with Jesus; that was all; he cared little for anything else.

III. Very briefly, let us consider THE APOSTLE'S ESTIMATE OF THIS DISEMBODIED STATE. He says, "To be with Christ; *which is far better.*" Now, the Greek has a triple comparative. We could not say "far more better" in our language, but that would be a fair translation. We will therefore read, "It is far rather preferable," or it is much better to be with Christ away from the body, than it would be to abide here. Now, you must recollect that Paul does not claim for the disembodied state that it is the highest condition of a believer, or the ultimate crown of his hopes. It is a state of perfection so far as it goes; the spirit is perfect, but the entire manhood is not perfect while the body

is left to moulder in the tomb. One half of the saint is left behind in the grave ; corruption, earth, and worms have seized upon it, and the grand concluding day of our manifestation can only come when the redemption of the body is fully achieved. The fulness of our glory is the resurrection, for then the body will be united to our spirit, and perfected with it. At present the saints who are with Jesus are without their bodies, and are pure spirits ; their humanity is in that respect maimed ; only half their manhood is with Jesus ; yet even for that half of the manhood to be with Christ is far better than for the whole of their being to be here in the best possible condition. Now, the apostle does not say, that to be with Christ is far better than to be here, and to be rich, young, healthy, strong, famous, great, or learned : Paul never thinks of putting those petty things into contrast with being with Christ. He had got above all that. There was he sitting chained in the dungeon, the poorest man in the emperor's dominions, and often, I have no doubt—for he was getting on to be " such an one as Paul the aged," and wrote particularly about an old cloak he had left at Troas—often he felt rheumatic pains shooting through him ; and he did not find this life to have many attractions of wealth or ease, though he might have had them if he had chosen them as his portion. He had given them all up, and counted them as insignificant trifles, not to be mentioned at all, for Jesus' sake. He is not speaking of the low joys of this world ; he is far above such considerations ; but he does mean that to be with Christ is infinitely superior to all the joys of Christians. Anything that the most of Christians know about Christ and heavenly joys and heavenly things is very poor compared with being with Christ. But he meant more than that ; he meant that the highest joys which the best taught believer can here possess are inferior to being with Christ. For, let me say, Paul was no obscure believer ; he was a leader among the followers of Christ. Could he not say, " Thanks be unto God, who always maketh us to triumph in every place " ?

He knew the graces of the Holy Spirit, he had them abundantly; he was head and shoulders above the tallest Christian here; he had the highest experience of any man out of heaven, and it was that which he contrasted with being with Christ, and he said that the most that we could get here of heavenly things was not to be compared with being with Christ. That was far, far, far better. And truly, brethren, so it is. Thanks be to God for all the mercies of the pilgrimage, for all the dropping manna and the following stream; but oh, the wilderness with all its manna, is nothing compared with the land that floweth with milk and honey. Let the road be paved with mercy, it is not so sweet as the Father's house of the many mansions to which it leads. It is true that in the battle our head is covered, the wings of angels oft protect us, and the Spirit of God himself nerves our arm to use the sword; but who shall say that the victory is not better than the battle? The warrior who has won the most of victory will tell you that the gladdest day will be when the sword rattles back into the scabbard, and the victory is won for ever. Oh, the wooing of Christ and the soul, this is very sweet: the rapturous joys we have had in the love-making between Christ and us, we would not exchange with emperors and kings, even if they offered us their crowns; but the marriage day will be better far, the glorious consummation of our soul's highest desire, when we shall be with our Wellbeloved where he is. Far better, said the apostle, and he meant it; far better it is.

He did not say—and I want you to notice this again—though he might have said it, "We shall be better in condition; no poverty there, no sickness there;" he did not say, "We shall be better in character;" he might have said it: there will be no sin, no depravity, no infirmity, no temptation there. He did not say, "We shall be better in employment," though surely it will be better to wait on the Master, close at his hand, than to be here amongst sinners and often amongst cold-hearted saints. He did not say, "We shall have better

society there," though, truth to tell, it will be better to be with the perfect than with the imperfect. Neither did he say we should see fairer sights there, though we shall see the city that hath foundations of jasper, whose light is the light of the Lamb's own presence. But he did say, "To be with Christ." He summed it up there. The bare being with Christ would be far better. And so it will be. Our spirit longs for it.

Yet mark you, for all that, he said he felt a pull the other way. He had a twitch towards stopping on earth, as well as a pull towards going to heaven, for he said, "To abide in the flesh is more needful for you." How I love Paul for thinking of the churches here when he had got heaven before him. Anthony Farindon says it is like a poor beggar woman outside the door, and she carries a squalling child, and some one says, "You may come in and feast, but you must leave the babe outside;" and she is very hungry, and she wants the feast; but she does not like to leave the babe, and so she is in a strait betwixt two. Or, he says again, it is like a wife who has children at home, five or six little ones, and her husband is on a journey, and suddenly there comes a letter which says that he wants her, and she must go to him, but she may do as she thinks best. She desires to go to her husband, but who will take care of the last little babe, and who is to see to all the rest? and so she is in a strait betwixt two. She loves him and she loves them. So stood the apostle, and oh! it is blessed to think of a man having such a love for Christ that for Christ's sake he loves poor souls well enough to be willing to stop out of heaven awhile. "Oh," says he, "it is all gain for me to go to heaven; for me to die is far better; yet there are some poor sinners who need to be called, some poor trembling saints to be comforted, and I do not know which is the best;" and the apostle stands puzzled; he does not know which it shall be. There we leave him. May we get into the same blessed embarrassment ourselves.

The last word shall be this. Concerning our beloved

friends gone from us, we do not sorrow as those who are without hope ; what is more, we do not sorrow at all. If we chance to sorrow, it is for ourselves, that we have lost their present company, but as for them it is far better with them ; and if the lifting of our little finger could bring them back again, dear as they are to us, we would not be so cruel as to subject them again to the troubles of this stormy sea of life. They are safe landed.. We will go to them, we would not have them return to us.

Then, with regard to ourselves, if we have believed in Jesus we are on our journey home, and all fear of death is now annihilated. You notice the apostle does not say anything at all about death, he did not think it worth mentioning ; in fact, there is no such thing to a Christian. I have heard of people being afraid of the pains of death. There are no pains of death : the pain is in life. Death is the end of pain. It is all over. Put the saddle on the right horse. Do not blame death for what he does not do. It is life that brings pain : death to the believer ends all evil. Death is the gate of endless joy, and shall we dread to enter there ? No, blessed be God, we will not.

And this points us to the fountain of bliss while we are here, for if heaven is to be with Christ, then the nearer we get to Christ here, the more we shall participate in that which makes the joy of heaven. If we want to taste heaven's blessed dainties while here below, let us walk in unbroken fellowship with him—so we shall get two heavens, a little heaven below, and a boundless heaven above, when our turn shall come to go home. Oh, I wish you were all on the way to being with Christ. If you do not go to be with Christ, where can you go ? Answer that question, and go to Jesus now by humble faith, that afterwards he may say, "Come ; ye did come on earth, now come again, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world."

SOLEMN PLEADINGS FOR REVIVAL.

"Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength; let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment."—ISAIAH xli. 1.

THE text is a challenge to the heathen to enter into a debate with the living God. The Lord bids them argue at their best, and let the controversy be calmly carried out to its issues, so as to be decided once for all. He bids them be quiet, reflect, and consider, in order that with renewed strength they may come into the discussion and defend their gods if they can. He urges them not to bring flippant arguments, but such as have cost them thought, and have weight in them, if such arguments can be. He bids them be quiet till they are prepared to speak, and then, when they can produce their strong reasons and set their cause in the best possible light, he challenges them to enter the lists and see if they can maintain for a moment that their gods are gods, or anything better than deceit and falsehood.

I am not about to speak of that controversy at this time, but to use the text with quite another view. We also who worship the Lord God Most High have a controversy with him. We have not seen his church and his cause prospering in the world for many a day as we could desire; as yet heathenism is not put to the rout by Christianity, neither does the truth everywhere trample down error; nations are not born in a day; the kingdoms of the world have not become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. We desire to reason with God about this, and he himself instructs us how to prepare for this sacred debate. He bids us be silent; he

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bids us consider, and then draw near to him with holy boldness and plead with him, produce our cause and bring forth our strong reasons. It seems to me that at the beginning of the year I cannot suggest to Christian people a more urgent topic than this, that we should plead with God that he would display among us greater works of grace than as yet our eyes have seen. We have read of wonderful revivals; history records the prodigies of the Reformation, and the marvellous way in which the gospel was spread during the first two centuries; we pine to see the like again, or to know the reason why it is not so, and with holy boldness it is our desire to come before the Lord and plead with him, as a man pleadeth with his friend. May God help us so to do in the power of the Holy Ghost.

I. First, then, LET US BE SILENT. "Keep silence before me, O islands." Before the controversy opens let us be silent with *solemn awe*, for we have to speak with the Lord God Almighty! Let us not open our mouths to impugn his wisdom, nor allow our hearts to question his love. What if things do not look as bright as we could wish? The Lord reigneth. And what if he seems to delay? Is he not the Lord God with whom a thousand years are as one day, and who is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness? We are going to make bold to speak with him, but still he is the eternal God, and we are dust and ashes. Whatever we may say with holy boldness, we would not utter a word in rash familiarity. He is our Father, but he is our Father in heaven. He is our Friend, but at the same time he is our Judge. We know that whatsoever he doeth is best. We would not say unto our Maker, "What makest thou?" nor to our Creator, "What hast thou done?" Shall the potter give account to the clay for the works of his hands? "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." When we look at what he doeth it may seem to our dim apprehension to be exceeding strange, and we may fail to read its meaning; but we need not wish to read it. It is the

glory of God to conceal a thing, and if he chooses to conceal it, let it be concealed. Truly, God is good to Israel, and his mercy endureth for ever. If this world's history is to drag on through another score of mournful centuries, it will only reveal so much the more matter for praise when the great hallelujahs of the ultimate victory shall peal forth.

Our silence of awe should deepen into that of *shame;* for, my brethren, though it is certainly true that the cause of God has not prospered, whose fault is this? If there has been straitening it has not been in God. Where then has it been? If the seed has rotted under the clods, or if the cankerworm has eaten the green shoot, so that the reaper has not joyfully filled his arm, whence cometh it? Has there not been sin among us, ay, sin in the church of God? What if Israel has turned her back in the day of battle? Is there not an accursed thing in the camp, and an Achan who has hidden away the goodly Babylonish garment and the shekel of gold? God saith, "Is there not a cause? Can two walk together, except they be agreed? If ye walk contrary to me I also will walk contrary to you." Truly, when I see how God has blessed us, I am not so much astonished that he has not given more, as I am amazed that he has given so much. Does he bless such unworthy instruments, such laggards, such slothful workers? Does he do anything by tools so unfit? Does he place any treasure in vessels so impure? This is to be ascribed to his grace. But if he doth not use us to the highest point, let us take shame and confusion of face to ourselves, and before the throne of his glory let us sit down in silence. What, indeed, can we say? We have no charges to bring against him, no accusations against the Most High, but we must silently confess that we ourselves are vile. Unto us belongeth shame and confusion of face.

Go further than this, and keep the silence of *consideration.* This is a noisy age, and the Church of Christ herself is too noisy. We have very little silent worship,

I fear. I do not so much regret the absence of silence from the public assembly as from our private devotions, where it has a sacred hallowing influence, unspeakably valuable. Let us be silent, now, for a minute, and consider what is it that we desire of the Lord. The conversion of thousands, the overthrow of error, the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom. Think in your minds what the blessings are which your soul pants after. Get a correct idea of them, and then enquire whether you are prepared to receive them? Suppose they were to be now bestowed, are you ready? If thousands of converts were to be born unto this one church, are you prepared to teach them, instruct them, and comfort them? Are you doing it now, you Christian people? Are you acting in such a way that God knows you to be fit to have the charge of those converts that you are asking for? You pray for grace—are you using the grace you have? You want to see more power—how about the power you have? Are you employing it? If a mighty wave of revival sweeps over London, are your hearts ready? Are your hands ready? Are your purses ready? Are you altogether ready to be carried along on the crest of that blessed wave? Consider. If you reflect, you will see that God is able to give his church the largest blessing, and to give it at any time. Keep silence and consider, and you will see that he can give the blessing by you or by me; he can make any one of us, weak as we are, mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, can make our feeble hands, though we have but a few loaves and fishes, capable of feeding myriads with the bread of life. Consider this, and this morning ask yourselves in the quiet of your spirits, what can we do to get the blessing. Are we doing that? What is there in our temper, in our private prayer, in our acts for God which would be likely to bring down the blessing? Do we act as if we were sincere? Have we really a desire for these things, which we say we desire? Could we give up worldly engagements to attend to the work of God? Could we spare

time to look after the Lord's vineyard? Are we willing to do the Lord's work; and are we in the state of heart in which we can do it efficiently and acceptably? Keep silence and consider. I would suggest to every Christian that he should sit a while before God when he reaches his home, and worship with the silence of awe, with the silence of shame, and then with the silence of careful thought concerning these things.

Then we shall pass on to the silence of *attention*. "Keep silence before me, O islands:" keep silence that God may speak to you; that God's Word may be heard in your soul; not parts of it only, but all of it; that God's Spirit may be heard with his gentle monitions warning you, with his blessed enlightenments revealing to you yourself and your Lord, with his divine promptings urging you to greater consecration and superior holiness, and with his divine assistances leading you onward in the path of a higher life than you have yet attained. Oh, it is well to sit still before the Lord, deaf to every voice but the divine. We cannot expect him to hear us if we will not hear him. "I will hear," says the prophet, "what God the Lord will speak." Do you always do so? If you have heard the Lord speak to you, you will own that there is no voice like his. Be silent till you hear the Lord's word slaying all your pride and self-will and self-seeking, and proclaiming his sole glory in every part of your manhood.

If you have learned attention, be silent with *submission*. For this you will need the gracious aid of the Holy Ghost. It is not easy to attain to full submission of soul to whatsoever the Lord wills. We are often like hard brass which will not take the impression from the seal, but if we were what we should be we should be as melted wax which at once takes the stamp that is put upon it. Oh, to have a heart that is quite silent as to any wish or will, or opinion, or judgment of our own, so that God's mind shall be our mind, God's will shall be our will. The church would soon be healed of her sorrows, and delivered from her divisions, if she would

for a while be silent; but the voice of a favourite teacher is heard by some, and the voice of another master in Israel is listened to by others, and so God's voice is lost amid the clamour of sects and the uproar of parties. Oh, that the church would sit at Jesus' feet, lay aside her prejudices, and take the Word in its simplicity and integrity, and accept what God the Lord, and he only, doth declare to be the truth. I invite the members of this church, and urge the members of all churches to see to this, that we cry unto the Lord for a blessed silence in his presence, till we sit like servants waiting for their Master's word, and stand like watchmen waiting for the Master's coming, ourselves quiet, restful, peaceful, resigned, nay, acquiescing in the divine will, all attent to hear each word that falls from him, and resolved with humble resolution that whatever the Lord shall speak that will we do; we will accept his word as law, and light, and life to our souls, and nothing else beside. The Lord send that solemn silence over all his people now.

II. In that silence LET US RENEW OUR STRENGTH. Noise wears us; silence feeds us. To run upon the Master's errands is always well, but to sit at the Master's feet is quite as necessary; for, like the angels which excel in strength, our power to do his commandments arises out of our hearkening to the voice of his word. If even for a human controversy quiet thought is a fit preparation, how much more is it needful in solemn pleadings with the Eternal One? Now let the deep springs be unsealed; let the solemnities of eternity exercise their power while all is still within us.

But how happens it that such silence renews our strength? It does so, first, by *giving space for the strengthening word to come into the soul, and the energy of the Holy Spirit to be really felt.* Words, words, words; we have so many words, and they are but chaff, but where is THE WORD that in the beginning was God and was with God? That Word is the living and incorruptible seed, "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." We want less of the words of man,

and more of him who is the very Word of God. Be quiet, be quiet, and let Jesus speak. Let his wounds speak to you; let his death speak to you; let his resurrection speak to you; let his ascension and his subsequent glory speak to you; and let the trumpet of his second advent ring in your ears. You cannot hear the music of these glorious things because of the rattle of the wheels of care and the vain jangle of disputatious self-wisdom. Be silent, that you may hear the voice of Jesus, for when he speaks you will renew your strength. The eternal Spirit is with his people, but we often miss his power because we give more ear to other voices than to his, and quite as often our own voice is an injury to us, for it is heard when we have received no message from the Lord, and therefore gives an uncertain sound. If we will wait upon the blessed Spirit, his mysterious influence will sway us most divinely, and we shall be filled with all the fulness of God. Even as we have seen the frost yield suddenly to the influence of the warm south wind, so shall our lethargy melt before his sovereign energy. How often have I felt in a moment my ice-locked spirit yield to the breath of the Holy Ghost. You have seen a cloud on high flying, as you thought, against the wind, driven on by some upper current of air which you did not feel below: even thus have we been carried on by upper currents which flesh and blood cannot understand. We sang as Dr. Watts does—

> "Look how we grovel here below,
> Fond of these trifling toys;
> Our souls can neither fly nor go
> To reach eternal joys."

But when the Holy Spirit came the lightning itself could not overtake us; we rode upon a cherub and did fly, yea, we did ride upon the wings of the wind, for God the everlasting One had caught us up and filled us with his power. Be silent, then, that the Spirit may thus work upon you. Let other spirits be gone—let the

spirit of the world, and the spirit of the flesh, and the spirit of self be banished, and let the Spirit of the Ever Blessed be heard speaking in your soul. Thus shall you renew your strength.

We must be silent to renew our strength, next, by *using silence for consideration as to who it is that we are dealing with.* We are going to speak with God about the weakness of his church and the slowness of its progress. Be silent, that you may remember who he is with whom you are expostulating. It is God the omnipotent, who can make his church mighty if he will, and that at once. We are coming to plead now with one whose arm is not shortened, and whose ear is not heavy. Renew your strength as you think of him. If you have doubted the ultimate success of Christianity renew your strength as you remember who it is that has sworn by himself that surely all flesh shall see the salvation of God. You are coming to plead with Jesus Christ. Be silent, and remember those wounds of his with which he has redeemed mankind! Can these fail of their reward? Shall Jesus be robbed of the power he has so dearly earned? The earth is the Lord's, and he will unswathe her of the mists which dimmed her lustre at the fall, and he will make this planet shine as brightly as when she first was rolled from between the palms of the omnipotent Creator. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Think of that, and renew your strength. Hath not the Lord said concerning his beloved Son, that he shall divide the spoil with the strong, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands? Shall it not be so?

Think, too, that you are about to appeal to the Holy Spirit; and there again you have the same divine attributes. What cannot the Spirit of God do? He sent the tongues of fire at Pentecost, and Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, and men of every nation heard the gospel at once. He turned three thousand hearts by one sermon to know the crucified Saviour to be the Messiah. He sent the apostles like flames of fire through the whole

earth, till every nation felt their power. He can do the like again. He can bring the church out of darkness into noonday. Let us renew our strength as we think of this. The work we are going to plead about is not ours one-half so much as it is God's: it is not in our hands, but in hands that cannot fail; therefore let us renew our strength as we silently meditate upon the Triune Jehovah with whom we have to speak.

In silence, too, let us renew our strength by *remembering his promises.* We want to see the world converted to God, and he has said that "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." "They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust." "The idols he shall utterly abolish." There are a thousand promises. Let us think of that, and however difficult the enterprise may be, and however dark our present prospects, we shall not dare to doubt when Jehovah has spoken and pledged his word.

Our strength will be renewed, next, if in silence we *yield up to God all our own wisdom and strength.* Brethren, I never am so full as when I am empty; I have never been so strong as in the extremity of weakness. The source of our worst weakness is our homeborn strength, and the source of our worst folly is our personal wisdom. Lord, help us to be still till we have abjured ourselves, till we have said, "Lord, our ways of working cannot be compared with thy ways of working; teach us how to work: Lord, our judgments are weak compared with thy perfect judgment; we are fools, be thou our teacher and guide in all things. Crush out of us our fancied strength, and make us like worms, for it is the worm Jacob that thou wilt make into the new sharp threshing instrument, which shall thresh the mountain. After this sort shall you renew your strength.

Keep silence, then, ye saints, till ye have felt your folly and your weakness, and then renew your strength

most gloriously by *casting yourselves upon the strength of God*. More than ever before let your inmost souls be filled with trust in the arm that never fails, the hand that never loses it cunning, the eye that is never closed, the heart that never wavers. Jehovah works everywhere, and all things are his servants. He works in the light, and we see his glory; but he equally works in the darkness, where we cannot perceive him. His wisdom is too profound to be at all times understood of mortal men. Let us be patient, and wait his time, for as surely as God lives the idols must go down, the crescent of Mohammed must wane for ever, and the harlot of the Seven Hills must be devoured with fire, for the Lord hath said it, and so must it be; Jehovah hath declared it, and who shall say him nay? With no more doubt of our Father's power than the child at its mother's breast has of its mother's love, with no more doubt than an angel before the throne can have of Jehovah's majesty, let us commit ourselves, each one after his own fashion, to suffering and to labour for the grand cause of God, feeling well assured that neither labour nor suffering can be in vain in the Lord.

Thus much, then, concerning the renewing of our strength. I wish we could have had a quarter of an hour's silence that you might reflect upon these topics, but I leave them with you, trusting that you will seek that silence at home, and so renew your strength.

III. Our text proceeds to add, "Then let them draw near." Beloved, you that know the Lord, I would urge upon you to DRAW NEAR. You are silent, you have renewed your strength, now enjoy access with boldness. The condition in which to intercede for others is not that of distance from God, but that of great nearness to him. Even thus did Abraham draw nigh when he pleaded for Sodom and Gomorrah. May God the Holy Spirit draw us near even now; perhaps the following five considerations may help us in so doing.

Let us remember *how near we really are*. We have been washed from every sin in the precious blood of

Jesus ; we are covered from head to foot at this moment with the spotless righteousness of Immanuel, God with us ; we are accepted in the Beloved ; yea, we are at this moment one with Christ, and members of his body. How could we be nearer ? How near is Christ to God ? So near are we ? Come near, then, in your personal pleadings, for you are near in your covenant Representative. The Lord Jesus has taken manhood into union with the divine nature, and now between God and man there exists a special and unparalleled relationship, the like of which the universe cannot present. No actual blood relationship exists between God and any other creature but man, " for verily he took not up angels, but he took up the seed of Abraham." " Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee " ? and yet hath he said this first and chiefly to the Lord Jesus Christ ; and next, in a true but secondary sense, to each regenerate one whom he has of his own will begotten by the word of truth. Come near, then, O ye sons of God, come near, for you are near. Stand where your sonship places you, where your Representative stands on your behalf. Let the slaves of the flesh, and the bondservants of the law, stand afar off from the Lord who speaks to them from Sinai ; but as for us, it is our joy to come very near, for the voice of love calls to us from Calvary.

The next consideration which may help you to draw near is that *you are coming to a Father*. That was a blessed word of our Lord's, " The Father himself loveth you." God forbid I should say a word to make you think less of the splendour and majesty of God ; but I pray you remember that, however great and terrible he is, he is our Father. I delight in those words of our poet :

" The God that rules on high,
And thunders when he please,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas :
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love."

As surely as my earthly father is near akin to me, and I may come to him with loving familiarity, so may I approach the Lord, who hath begotten me again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and I may say to him, "Abba," "Father," and he will not disregard the cry. Hath he not given us the spirit of adoption? How can he despise that which he gives? Come, then, and speak in your Father's ear. O child of God, you are not talking to a stranger, you are not about to hold a debate with an enemy, you are not seeking to wring a blessing from an unwilling hand. It is to your Father that you speak. Come near to him, I pray you, and plead this day.

Remember next, that *the desire which is in our heart for God's glory and the extension of his church, is a desire written there by the Holy Spirit.* Now, if the Holy Spirit himself indites the prayer, and he knows the mind of God, if he makes intercession in our hearts according to the will of God, we need have no hesitation to express our desires, because our desires are simply the shadow of the eternal purpose; and that which always was in the mind of God to give, the Spirit of God has inclined us to ask. True prayer is the intimation of God to man that he intends to bless him. It is the herald of mercy. Plead, then, O child of God, for the Spirit of God is pleading in you. Come and speak out that which he speaks within. He himself helpeth your infirmities, making intercession in you according to the will of God. When the Spirit prompts, what cause can there be for hesitation? We must speed when he inspires.

Remember next, that *what we ask,* if we are now about to plead with God concerning his kingdom, *is according to his own mind.* We are at one with God in this matter. If it were not for God's glory for sinners to be converted we would not pray for it. We desire to see thousands of sinners turn to Christ, but it is with this view, that the infinite mercy, wisdom, power, and love of God may be manifested towards them, and so

God may be praised. Verily, much as our heart is set upon the prosperity of the church of God, if it were conceivable that such prosperity would not glorify God we would not ask for it. We desire to see, not our notions, but God's truth prevail. I do not want you to believe as I believe except so far as that belief is according to the mind of God. I pray every believer here to search his heart and see whether his desire be a pure one, having God's glory as its Alpha and Omega. It is God's truth, God's kingdom, God's glory that we want to see promoted. If this be the case may we not come very boldly? We have not only the king's ear but his heart also, and we may open our mouths wide. When we have a question as to the Lord's will, we are bound to go no further than "nevertheless, not as I will"; but when there is no ground for hesitancy, with what sacred ardour may we press our suit!

Moreover, there is this further consideration; *the Lord loves to be pleaded with.* He might have given all the covenant blessings without prayer; wherefore does he compel us to use entreaties, unless it be that he loves to hear the voices of his children? God has given to the Church untold mercies in answer to intercession, for he delights to bless his people at the mercy seat. In this our own beloved church prayer has been more glorious and excellent than all the mountains of prey. Its bow has not returned empty, neither has its shield been cast away. Prayer has been bolder than the lion, swifter than the eagle, and has overthrown all her adversaries, treading them beneath her feet as straw is trodden for the dunghill. To this day we live by prayer. The church of God has never gained a victory but in answer to prayer. Her whole history is to the praise of the glory of a prayer-hearing God. Come, then, brethren, if we have sped so well before, and if God invites us now, yea, if he delights in our petitions, let us not be slack, but enlarge our requests before him. Oh for grace that we may now this day and henceforward draw very near to God.

IV. I may want a few minutes over the allotted time this morning while I now come to the fourth and last point, which is, "LET US SPEAK." Be silent, renew your strength, draw near, and then speak. What have we to say upon the matter which concerns us? Let us first speak in the spirit of *adoring gratitude*. How sweet to think that there should be a Saviour at all; to think that the project of rescuing this poor world from her ruin should ever have been entertained in the courts of heaven; to think that the Spirit should be given to reside among men, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the rebels to obedience to the truth! To think that there should be a heavenly kingdom set up, as it is set up; that it should have made such advances as it has made, and should still grow mightily! That Jesus Christ should be seen of angels is put down as a wonder, but it is mentioned next to it that he was "believed on in the world." He has been believed on by millions, and, however gloomy the prospects of the church may appear, the kingdom of Christ is not an insignificant kingdom, even now. Those who deride her laugh too soon. She is in her twilight, as Voltaire said, but it is the twilight of her morning, and not of her evening. Brighter times are coming; but even now, up to this moment, the history of the church cannot be told without adoring gratitude to God. She has been foolish, and has lost her strength, but, like Samson's, it will return. Deceived and deluded in the days of Constantine, she suffered that baptised heathen to proclaim an adulterous connection between the Church and the State, and from that day her glory has departed, and her power has fled. When will she repent? The nominal church goes after her lovers, seeking her corn and her wine at their hands, and she says to kings and queens of the earth, "Be ye my head, and let your senators rule me." While she does this God cannot and will not bless her in any great degree. When was the ark taken? Never till it was defended by the carnal sword. When did the ark triumph?

Was it not when left alone in its own glory it smote Dagon to the ground? When the visible Church gets back to her chastity to Christ, she will say, "We have nothing to do with parliaments and kings, except to convert them; ours is a spiritual kingdom, and statecraft is foreign to her. We ask not your endowments; we care not for your persecutions; let us alone; all we ask is a clear stage and no favour."

The bride of Christ comes not into the world to toy with the politics of princes, hers is a higher work. She leans upon the Lord alone, and yields allegiance to none else. Remove worldliness and you will see bright days; but the grand impediment of the church now is the arm of flesh, the lofty, high-sounding titles of her prelates, the palaces of her bishops,—be amazed, ye heavens, that the successors of the apostles should be owners of palaces!—the priestliness of her ministers and the lack of gospel simplicity. This hampers her; but cut the church clear of this, and God's bare arm will soon win victory unto the truth in this land. I for my part bless and magnify the Lord that, though a great section of the visible church has played the harlot so sadly in the midst of the nations, yet he has not quite cast her away. He keeps a chosen company, who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; on whose banner is written, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism;" and whose watchword is, "One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren." As to the world, we will seek its conversion, but we will never enter into alliance with it, much less bow down our necks before its kings and princes. May God grant us grace as we draw near to him, to speak out in adoration of him.

Next, let us speak in *humble expostulation.* I would earnestly urge upon my brethren in Christ to expostulate thus with the Lord. "O Lord, thy truth does not prosper in the land, yet thou hast said, 'My word shall not return unto me void.' Lord, thou art every day blasphemed, and yet thou hast said that thy glory shall be seen of all flesh. Lord, they set up the idols; even

in this land, where thy martyrs burned, they are setting up the graven images again. Lord, tear them down, for thy name's sake; for thine honour's sake, we beseech thee, do it. Dost thou not hear the enemy triumph? They say the gospel is worn out. They tell us that we are the relics of an antiquated race; that modern progress has swept the old faith away. Wilt thou have it so, good Lord? Shall the gospel be accounted a worn-out almanack, and shall they set up their new gospels in its stead? Souls are being lost, O God of mercy! Hell is being filled, O God of infinite compassion! Jesus sees but few brought to himself and washed in his precious blood. Time is flying, and every year increases the number of the lost! How long, O God, how long? Wherefore tarriest thou?" In this manner order your case before the Lord, and he will hearken unto you.

When you have spoken by way of expostulation, then turn to *pleading*. Plead with all your skill in argument. "There is thy promise, O Jehovah; wilt thou not keep it? Thou hast said unto thy Son, Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession! We do ask in Jesus' name. Do it for thy promise sake! Lord, thou hast done great things and unspeakable in times gone by: we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us the wondrous things which thou didst in their days and in the old time before them: thou art the same Lord, therefore glorify thyself again. By all the past, we beseech thee, reveal thyself at this present." Plead with the Lord and lay stress upon his glory. Tell him that it glorifies his mercy to save sinners, and glorifies his wisdom and his power, yea, every attribute of his divine nature. Then plead the merit of his Son. Oh brethren, plead the blood, plead the wounds, plead the bloody sweat in Gethsemane, plead the cross, plead the death and resurrection, and come not away from the mercy-seat till with this mighty plea you have won the victory.

I scarcely need remind you at how many points you

may get a grip of the covenant angel; for when wrestling with him, if you have but the will to do it, you may seize him anywhere and hold him fast, and say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." I wish I could preach like John Knox, but I wish ten times more that I could pray like him,—a man who would not take "no" for an answer, but won Scotland for Christ, and she remains Christ's still through John Knox's prayer. It is not possible for prelacy to flourish where Knox has prayed. Oh for prayer such as that again. King of kings, wilt thou not stretch out thy sceptre and save men? Wilt thou not pluck thy sword out of its scabbard, and smite thy foes? There be some men to whom God would almost say, as he did to Moses, "Let me alone." They are favoured to use such forcible arguments and cogent pleas that wrath forbears, and mercy yields the blessing. If we can push on as Moses did with renewed pleadings and entreaties, the blessing will come. This is what England, yea, the world, wants —men who can plead with God, men who can draw near and then speak.

Again, dear brethren, after we have been silent, after we have renewed our strength, and after we have drawn near to God, let us speak to-day in the way of *dedication.* Now, here I cannot suggest to any man what he in particular may speak. I charge you before the living God lie not unto him, but if you can say this, I pray you say it—"I give to God this day my whole being, absolutely and for ever, my body, my soul, my spirit. I have asked that his kingdom may come: I pledge myself in his sight to extend that kingdom by every power I possess or may be able to gain, by every opportunity he may put in my way, and by every means which I am able to use." I do not think Jesus ought to have less than that from us, but I know he gets far less. Perhaps the Lord may move some of you young men to say, "Lord, I want to see thy kingdom spread, and therefore I will give myself up to preach the gospel." Perhaps some of you good women here may say, "I will undertake a

work of usefulness of some kind or other for Jesus; I am resolved I will." And you who have this world's goods, I hope you will say, "I know that this good work always needs money: I have it: it shall be freely given. When I see that the gospel does not spread, I will not have the reflection on my mind that it is retarded by deficiency of pecuniary means, while I have gold stored up." I will not suggest to any of you more than this—whatever the Lord moves you to do, do it; but I do think when we come to plead with the Lord after this fashion we ought to be able to say, "Lord, do spread thy kingdom; it is not my fault if it does not spread. I do for thee all I can. I boast not of it, for all I do I ought to do, and I wish I could do a thousand times as much; but still, Lord, during this year of grace I hope to do much for thee which I may have forgotten hitherto."

Last of all, brethren, let us speak still in the way of *confidence*. However we may complain of the spread of error, the deaths of good men, and the fewness of able ministers to take their places; however we may think the times to be dark and dreary, let us never speak as if God were dead. I walked some time ago with one of the most earnest Christians I know of, a very devout man, and he told me he was afraid one day the streets of London would run with blood. He was afraid of an educated democracy which, being uneducated in religion in School Board schools, would become clever Atheists, and cast off all reverence for God and law; and he gave me an awful picture of what was going to happen. But I touched him on the arm and said, "There is one thing you have forgotten, dear friend: God is not dead yet. What you are dreading will never occur in this land, I am sure. We have an open Bible, we have still some who preach the gospel with all their hearts, and there is still a salt and leaven in the city of London that God will bless to keep down the rottenness and corruption. In spite of all his foes, the Lord reigneth." What, my friends, the Devil conquer our

God? Never. Rome triumphant over Zion? Never. Rome has been very cunning; the Devil has done his best in Roman Catholicism; there is no more wisdom left in the Devil than he has put into that concern, and if that is confounded he has lost all. That is his *ultimatum*, the course of hellish craft can go no further. He has staked all his power on the Church of Rome, and to a certainty she will be driven before the Church of Christ like chaff before the wind. They shall ask and say, "Where is this harlot city that made the nations drunk with the wine of her fornication, that rode upon the scarlet beast up and down upon the earth, and had written upon her brow, 'Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots'?" Vain will it be to ask where is she? for they shall answer, "Did you not hear the splash of the millstone as the angel hurled it into the flood, and said, 'Thus terribly shall Babylon fall, and thus no more be found at all'?" Then shall go up the shout, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Let us anticipate the hour. Even now let every heart shout, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah," and yet again let us say, "Hallelujah, the Lord reigneth, and all must be well."

TO SOULS IN AGONY.

"The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me. I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. . . . Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling."—PSALM CXVI. 3, 4, 8.

THE great trouble which is here described very probably happened to David long after he had been a believer. He had been living the life of faith, perhaps, for years, in a calm, happy, and quiet manner; and by-and-by he met with outward tribulation, and not a little of inward conflict. At some time or other it generally happens to a believer, between the setting out at the wicket-gate and the crossing of the last river, that he endures a great fight of afflictions. My observation leads me to notice that those who begin with rough times frequently have a smooth path afterwards, while others, whose first experience was very sunny and peaceful, meet with fierce conflicts farther on. Those who have enjoyed a long, calm, and comparatively easy life, may meet their stormiest hours at the close of their day; for some of the best of God's children, to use an old Puritan's expression, "are put to bed in the dark." Their sun sets in clouds, but doubtless it rises again in the full splendour of the eternal morning. Somewhere or other, brother, you will learn to acknowledge that—

> "The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
> Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

The saints above who sing the new song are, at least many of them, described by the words, "These are they

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Delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

which came out of great tribulation." That is the general way to heaven, and perhaps few travellers reach paradise by any other road.

Let believers, therefore, not count upon immunity from trouble but let them reckon upon grace sufficient for it. Let them believe that God's choicest letters of love are sent to us in black-edged envelopes. We are frightened at the envelope; but inside, if we know how to break the seal, we shall find riches for our souls. Great trials are the clouds out of which God showers great mercies. Very frequently, when the Lord has an extraordinary mercy to send to us, he employs his rough and grizzled horses to drag it to the door. The smooth rivers of ease are usually navigated by little vessels filled with common commodities, but a huge galleon loaded with treasure traverses the deep seas.

Let the children of God learn from this passage in David's experience that their best resort in trouble is prayer. When the sorrows of death compass you, pray! When the pains of hell get hold upon you, pray! When you find trouble and sorrow, pray! Everything else which prudence and wisdom suggest is to be done in a time of difficulty, but none of these things are to be relied upon by themselves. "Salvation is of the Lord," whether it be salvation from troubles or from sins. You do right to provide the horse for the day of battle, but still safety is of the Lord. Use the means, but never supplant faith by the use of means. When you have done all, trust in God as though you had done nothing, for "Except the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain." In all things pray; and be you well assured that if at this moment you are in the same plight as David was, prayer will bring you out of it. Prayer is the catholicon, the universal cure; it subdues every disease. In spiritual conflicts it has a thousand uses; you may say of it, "By this will I break through a troop, by this will I leap over a wall, by this will I put on shield and buckler, and by this will I smite the foe." Prayer can unlock the treasures of God, and shut the

gates of hell; prayer can quench the violence of flames and stop the lions' mouths; prayer can overcome heaven and bend omnipotence to its will. Only pray, brother, believingly, and in the name of the Well-Beloved, and answers of peace must be given you.

I intend, this evening, to use the text with another view; I mean to accommodate it, as I think lawfully, and to use it as a description of the condition of an awakened sinner. To sinners under conviction I would address myself, for I know there are such in the congregation. I was glad to hear their cries the other night, and I have faith that the Lord means to bless them, and bring them into liberty. We shall speak, first, of *this poor soul's condition;* then of *his course of action;* and then of *the deliverance he obtained.*

I. First, here is THE WRETCHED CONDITION into which many a poor awakened soul has been brought.

But let me, before I proceed further, say, that if any of you are believers in Christ, and have not felt all that I speak of, you are not to condemn yourselves because of it. There are many maladies in the world, and if I am describing a sickness, and the way in which the physician cures it, you must not say, "I am surely wrong, for I never felt that phase of the disease." That does not matter. No man suffers all maladies. If you are resting upon Jesus only, do not disturb yourself; that which I am about to utter is not meant for *your* disturbance, but for other people's comfort.

From our text I remark that many a troubled conscience *feels the sorrows of death;* that is to say he is the subject of griefs similar to those which beset men on their dying beds. I have passed through this state myself, and I shall therefore describe it the more feelingly, What are the sorrows of death?

One of the sorrows of a sinner's death is *the retrospect.* The dying sinner looks back, and sees nothing in his life that yields him comfort. He could wish that the day had been darkness in which it was said that a child was born into the world, for he feels that his existence has

been a blank, and worse than that, an insult to God, and the cause of misery to himself. He cannot see a bright or hopeful spot in his whole history. So, too, the man truly awakened weeps over a dreadful past, and laments because all is evil, and the very things he once gloried in are tarnished. He sees that to have been sin which before he thought to have been righteousness, and he bemoans himself, saying within his heart, "Would God I had never been born." Many an awakened man has said, as John Bunyan did, that he wished he had been a frog or a toad, or a venomous serpent, sooner than have been a man to have lived as he had lived. Are you feeling, dear friend, or have you ever felt, that sorrow of death? Some of us have felt it keenly.

Another sorrow of death is grief over *the present.* The man lies tossing to and fro upon his last bed, and all his glory and beauty are gone. The bloom of health has departed from him. He is a very different man from what he was in the days of his agility and vigour, and he knows it. So is it with the sinner; he feels the pining sickness of sin consuming him as the moth consumes a garment. His moisture is turned into the drought of summer; his glory is as a faded flower; and the excellency of his flesh, wherein he boasted himself, and said that he was no worse than others, and, perhaps, was even better, is now passed away. The Spirit, when he blows upon man, finding all flesh to be grass, withers it all up; and so he destroys the glory of man's estate, and makes his excellency decay, till the man is sick to death of himself. The dying man also sees all his strength departing. Perhaps he essays, like Samson, to shake himself as at other times, but he is mistaken. The limbs that bare him to his bed fall under him, and the hand with which he laboured drops palsied by his side. The very eyelids scarce can drop to form a curtain from the light, or lift themselves to admit the blessed beams of the sun. The golden bowl is breaking, and the silver cord is being snapped. It is just so with an awakened sinner. He feels death in

his soul. He used to be able, as he thought, to do anything; his notion was that he could repent and believe, amend and reform, and save himself whenever he liked: but now the cold chill of death has come upon all his powers, and he hears even Christ in mercy saying, "Without me ye can do nothing. No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." A man experiences a dreadful paralysis in his soul when he is really and thoroughly awakened, and the Spirit of God is making sure work of his conversion. He sees his beauty faded and his strength departed, and thus the sorrows of death get hold upon him. Another present sorrow of death is the discovery that friends are no longer of any service. The dying man must leave wife and children; they would fain accompany him, but they cannot. That dear wife would be willing to dare death itself if she might still continue the companion of the man whom she has loved; but it must not be. The fondest affection cannot help now. The awakened sinner discovers precisely the same thing with regard to spiritual help. He would have looked to a priest, but he dares not; he would have looked to his minister, but he knows that if he did he would be disappointed. He finds emptiness written upon every creature, so far as his soul's necessities are concerned. His sore is too terrible for any man to find a plaster, his wound too deep for any human hand to close it up. The sorrows of death in this respect compass him.

Perhaps the worst sorrow about the death of an ungodly man is *the prospect*. The past is black, but blacker still the future. The present is gloomy, but, oh, the darkness which may be felt, which environs the hereafter! The dying man shudders at the awful future, and so does the awakened sinner. He dares not go forward; he is afraid, and a dreadful sound is in his ears. I, myself, before I obtained mercy, was afraid lest every tuft of grass I trod on should open beneath my feet and swallow me up; so did sin press upon me, that I should not have been astonished if I had met in my daily walks an

angel, as Balaam did, with a drawn sword; and if he had said to me, "You are doomed for ever for your sin, I could only have been dumb before him, or confessed the justice of the sentence. Thus does many a sinner feel the sorrows of death compass him. They are all around him—these sorrows of the past, and the present, and the future.

The description becomes yet more graphic in the next sentence. *Awakened sinners sometimes feel what they describe as the pains of hell:* not that any living man does endure the pains of hell to the extent which they are suffered in hell, but still a dreadful foretaste of those pains may be experienced, and sometimes is experienced, by an awakened conscience. What are these pains of hell?

First, there is the pain of *remorse.* Before the soul believes in Christ it has no repentance, but it suffers remorse, a sorrow for sin because of its penalty, a dreadful horror of having lived such a life, because it sees that it must be punished for that life, and that God, the infinitely just, must take vengeance upon its transgressions. Remorse! Is not its tooth as sharp as that of the undying worm? Is not its burning as the fires of Tophet? When we felt it we cried, "My soul chooseth strangling rather than life." If God in mercy did not stay the soul with some little wavering hope, even before it comes to faith in Jesus, surely the spirit of man would utterly fail under a remorseful sense of sin.

One of the pains of hell is a sense of *condemnation.* The lost souls are called the "damned"—in other words, *the condemned.* Assuredly, before we believed in Jesus, some of us felt that we were condemned. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." I recollect how that curse howled through my soul like the tempest shrieking among the shrouds of a sinking ship. "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them"—I knew that I had not continued in all things required by the law,

and I knew that I was cursed. And then came this other text: it was the gospel side of the same terrible blast,—"He that believeth not is condemned already"—*condemned already*—"because he hath not believed on the Son of God." When two such winds as those two texts meet each other it is enough to sweep the poor frail tenement of manhood to a ruin like that which overthrew the house wherein the sons of Job were met to feast. Oh, brethren, it is no little thing—let those who know it assure you—to have felt the pains of hell.

Perhaps one of the acutest pangs of an awakened conscience is a sense of *hopelessness*, a terrible despair, unalleviated by any prospect of improvement in the future. We were driven to that, too, some of us: all hope of our being saved was lost. There was sometimes a little twinkling ray of light which seemed to say, "Jesus came to seek and to save sinners;" but we could not even see that lone star at all times, for we thought that he did not come to seek and to save such sinners as we were, and, moreover, since we had rejected him aforetime, we feared that his mercy was clean gone for ever. How despairingly was I wont to harp upon that thought. I now wish I had not done so, but I know that some others do it, and I would speak to their experience. May God deliver their frail barks from the maelstrom of despair, that awful whirlpool which has sucked down so many.

There is another pang of hell which the awakened feel, and that is, *a crushing sense of misery*. Though not in hell yet—and blessed be God you will not be—yet some of you feel almost as wretched as if you were there; for remorse, intensified by a sense of condemnation, and lashed by despair, creates a dreadful storm within your soul, till your heart cries out,

> "At noise of thy dread waterspouts
> Deep unto deep doth call;
> Thy breaking waves go over me,
> Yea, and thy billows all."

"I am cast out from thy sight: I seek thee, but I

cannot find thee: I cry after thee, but thou hearest me not." Then is the soul indeed smitten. Read the books of Job and Jeremiah, and you will see what broken hearts can suffer. Those books were not written for people in olden time only, but they declare the present experience of many a seeker after Christ, and thus they oftentimes render comfort to poor souls when no other portion of God's Word seems to have a single syllable to say to them.

Thus I have taken two great sentences of the text—"The sorrows of death compassed me," and, "The pains of hell gat hold upon me." But the case was a worse than this, for *the poor soul felt no alleviation* and knew of no escape. These things were by themselves, unsoftened, left in all their terror, the gall was unmixed, the vinegar undiluted. Notice the language. "The sorrows of death *compassed me*." It is a very strong word. When the hunters seek their prey they form a cordon around the poor animal that is to be destroyed. The poor panting creature looks to the right, but a man with a spear is there, he looks to the left and there are the dogs. Before and behind him are more spearmen, more hounds, more hunters; there is no way of escape. So does an awakened soul discern no rescue, no loophole by which it may be delivered. The text says, "The pangs of hell *gat hold upon me*." "Gat hold," as if the jaws of the lion had really gripped the lamb, or the paws of the bear were hugging the poor defenceless sheep. "Gat hold upon me," as though God's terrible sergeant from the court of justice had laid his hand upon his shoulder, and said, "I arrest thee in the name of God to lie in hell's prison, and perish for ever." Many a soul has felt that, and felt also that it could not get away from the terrible grip. Some who know nothing of contrition and heart-break enquire, "Why do they not get out of such bondage?" Ah, but if *you* were in that condition such a question would grieve, if not exasperate, you. I have known persons put a great many questions to troubled hearts.

which they themselves could not answer if they were in their state. Do you ask a man who has had both his legs broken, and lies across the rails of the railway—why do you not walk home? Why does he not walk home? Say rather—why do you ask such a foolish question? When a poor soul is broken to pieces and despairing, tell him what *Christ* did for him, and say very little about what *he* ought to do: you will never comfort the desponding man by telling him his duty, speak rather of Jesus' love. Poor souls, they are so disturbed and tossed about that they can do nothing: tell them what Jesus has done; that is the way to bring light to their souls.

Once more, the psalmist felt *no comfort from any exertion that he made.* That takes in the last sentence of the text's description. "I found trouble and sorrow;" so that he looked for something, but the only result of his search was that he *found* trouble and sorrow. Do you remember, beloved believer, in the days when you were under bondage on account of sin, how you bound yourself apprentice to Moses to work out your own salvation by your own goodness? What did you get? Surely you found trouble in the work, and sorrow as its wages. You were like a horse at a mill: the whip was used very freely upon you, but it brought you nothing except a sense of failure, a conviction that all you had done was rather a provocation of God by setting up an antichrist of your own righteousness, than any help towards an atonement for your sin. You found trouble and sorrow. Perhaps you went to Mr. Legality, and he and his son, Mr. Morality, did what they could for you; but if you were really awakened all that you got from them was trouble and sorrow. That was the whole result of it. It is just possible that you went over the road to the ceremonial shop—attended one of the ritualistic joss-houses, and went through the performances there, and then you were told that a priest could absolve you, and an outward form and ceremony could quiet your mind. Ah, if you were

a living soul you found trouble and sorrow in all that foolery, and by this time you have come to look upon it with intense contempt, as the most intolerable imposture of any age since man began to seek out many inventions. Vain is it to harp to a hungry belly, or dance to a broken limb, and equally a mockery are all the posturings and mummeries of Romanism to those whose hearts bleed for sin.

> "None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
> Can do helpless sinners good."

If they look elsewhere they will find trouble and sorrow, and nothing more.

Assuredly this is a pretty pass to be brought to. What is to be done? What is to be done? Sinner, there is nothing to be done; at least, nothing which you can do. You are shut up to be saved by Jesus, or to be lost. I liked the remark of a good brother from this platform the other day, when he said that gospel ministers were fishers, and that we were to fish with nets. It was all a mistake that we were to catch people with a bait; that was angling, and there was nothing about angling in Christ's commission. We are to fish with nets. Now, what is a net for? The net is to shut the fish up; it goes under them, around them, everywhere, and shuts them up so that they cannot get out. That is exactly what God does with poor sinners whom he means to save. He shuts them right up. He puts the net round them, and they cannot get out. Only when the net quite encloses his fish can the gospel fisherman get them out of the sea of sin, and lift them into the boat where Jesus sits. We must get the net right round them—shut them up by the law that they may be brought to Christ. Every avenue of escape is closed against you for ever, sinner, except one, and that is Christ, who says, "I am the door." There is no other door, neither upwards nor downwards, to the right nor to the left, before nor behind. You are ruined and destroyed, O sinner, and perish you must, if left to yourself. There

is none in earth, or heaven, that can help you, save only one; and oh, if the Lord will lead you to look to him, what a blessed thing it will be.

II. That brings us to the second part of our discourse, which is, to speak about the wakened sinner's COURSE OF ACTION. "*Then called I upon the name of the Lord.*"

What did he do? First, *he called*—called upon God's name, invoked him, spoke to him, lifted up his heart, and lifted up his voice, and called as a man might do who is lost in a fog and calls to a neighbour, hoping to hear a voice that will guide him; or as one who is far away in the bush of Australia and gives a call in the hope that some human voice may respond to it. This call is often described as a cry—a natural, simple, inartificial, unpleasant, but most effectual style of expressing our distress. Oh, sinner, if God has really been at work with you, and put you where I have been describing, you will call to God *now;* your heart will cry to God at once. Tears will speak for you, sighs will speak for you, your heart in its silence will speak unto God and call upon his name.

Now, notice, he says, "Then called I upon the name of the *Lord.*" There will be no more calling upon ministers, or calling upon priests, or calling upon himself; but "then called I upon the name of the *Lord.*" The sinner had forgotten the Lord till then, and now the Lord came to his remembrance. "When he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare;" thus his father came to the prodigal's remembrance. When we get among the swine, and would fain fill our bellies with their husks, but cannot, then we begin to pray to God, whom we have forgotten. "Then called I upon the name of the Lord." Now, what better could he do, for who could help him if the sorrows of death compassed him? Who but he who overthrew death, and vanquished the grave? Who can help us when the pains of hell get hold upon us, but he who has passed through the pangs that were due to us for the death penalty, and who has cast both death

and hell into the lake of fire? Who can help the hopeless one so well as the conqueror of death and hell? Who can sympathise like the Lord? The Lord Jesus himself has known the sorrows of death, and therefore he is touched with compassion for the sons of men. Is he not the Son of Man himself, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin? Poor sinner, I tried to shut you up, but now I set before you an open door. Call upon the name of him who knows your condition, and is able to meet it, and to deliver you.

When did he call? That is the important point in this text. "*Then* called I upon the name of the Lord." *Then.* Was that the first time in his life? Perhaps it was. Begin at once, O sinner. Notice, he says, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me, I found trouble and sorrow; *then* called I upon the name of the Lord." When his condition was at its very worst, then he called upon God. Why did he not stop till he became better? He knew that delays are dangerous. "*Then* called I." Had he tarried till he was better he would never have called at all; but he called *then;* and, though it was the first time, he was not ashamed to break the ice, or if he was ashamed yet he did it and succeeded. Suppose that you never till this night did ever look to your heavenly Father, and now it is the worst state of life with you that ever you were in. What then? Even now is the time for prayer. Now you want your God; and now you may have your God. "*Then* called I." You see he did not call upon God till God sent death and hell after him. He was a wandering sheep and so set on going astray that he would not come back till the two fiercest dogs that the great Shepherd keeps had come after him, and then he came back with a will. I half wish that God would send death and hell after some of you who never will come else, and that they might worry you and tear you, and make you return to the great Shepherd. "*Then* called I." That is to say, when I could call on no one else. No sinner ever calls

upon God till he finds that he has nowhere else to go to; and yet the Lord receives these good-for-nothings. Although we only come because we are forced to come, yet will he receive us. Into the port of sovereign grace no vessel ever runs except through stress of weather; when the sea is rough and the wind furious, and the tempest is on, and the ship must go down else, then Lord Will-be-Will, who has held the helm before, and said, "I will never enter that harbour," is suddenly subdued, and cries, "Oh for a gust of heavenly wind to blow us between the two red lights, right into the safe waters, where we may ride at peace." I pray God to send a tempest after all of you Jonahs that you may be brought to the right place after all, and landed safely on the shore of sovereign mercy. "Then called I upon the name of the Lord."

And now for his prayer. Here it is—"O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." *A very natural prayer*, was it not? He just said what he meant and meant what he said, and that is the way to pray. It is *a very short prayer*. Many a prayer is too long by twenty times. It is smothered under a bed-full of words. There are times when a Christian man can pray from hour to hour; but it is a great mistake when brethren measure their supplications by the clock. The great matter is not how long you pray, but how earnestly you pray. Consider the life of the prayer rather than the length of the prayer. If your prayer reaches to heaven it is long enough. What longer can it need to be? If it does not reach the Lord, though it occupied you for a week, it would not be long enough to be of use.

It was *a humble prayer:* "O Lord, I beseech thee." It is the language of one who is bowed into the dust. It was *an intense prayer:* "O Lord, I *beseech* thee, deliver my soul." But I want you most of all to notice that it was *a scriptural prayer*. There are three great little prayers in Scripture,—"O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul;" "God, be merciful to me a sinner;" and, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy

kingdom." These are all contained in the Lord's prayer. "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul," is "Deliver us from evil." "God, be merciful to me a sinner,"—what is that but "Forgive us our trespasses"? And what is the prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," but that grand petition, "Thy kingdom come"? How wonderfully comprehensive is that prayer which our Lord Jesus has given us for a model. All prayers may be condensed into it, or distilled from it.

Let no person here say, "I am in the distress which you have described, but I cannot pray." Why not? "I have no words." You want no words: wordless prayers are frequently the best. "But I can only groan." Groan away, brother. "But I feel as if I could only sigh." Sigh, then. "My heart aches, but I do not know how to express myself." Do not express yourself; let your heart ache on, only let it ache up to God. Turn all your desires towards him, and let this be the intense pleading of your spirit; "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." You know we have a law that people must not beg in the streets. There is a man I know in a certain road who does not beg and yet begs. The police would not let him beg, and therefore he never begs at all,—not he. It would be a slander to say of him that he begs, only he wears a pair of shoes through which you can see his toes and the side of his heel; you can spy his knee through his trousers; his cheeks are all sunken, and his whole appearance is that of a consumptive man who must soon die. He has been consuming now for many years, and dying daily most comfortably. I believe that if I were to say to him "Are you a beggar?" he would reply, "Beggar? no sir, certainly not; I never beg." Yet he is one of the most successful of beggars. His looks beg, his rags beg, his flesh begs, his weariness begs, his general air of sickness begs, everything about him begs. *He begs all over.* That is the way to pray. Pour out your heart before the Lord, with or without words, as you

find most easy, but let your inmost heart be really full of desire. Be resolved about obtaining the blessing. Do as one did the other night, who said within himself, "I am a lost soul, but I will never rise from the side of this bed till I find the Saviour. I am determined to get forgiveness or die on my knees." He cried and groaned, and won the day. We should not have liked to have heard his pitiful cries, for there was no beauty or elegancy in his language, and no music in his groans; but the Lord heard him, and saved his soul.

"O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul," is a prayer most congruous to the situation, and in every way *suitable* to it. Oh, that all prayers were as suitable as this. This, then, is the wisdom of every poor distressed soul in its time of trouble. It must, by a simple faith in Jesus, breathe out its desire at the cross, and say, "Jesus, Saviour, save me now, and deliver my soul."

III. Our third point is DELIVERANCE, and for this I refer you to the eighth verse.

This poor, pleading, doubting, trembling petitioner received *what he asked for*. He said, "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul," and ere long he sang, "Thou hast delivered my soul." As the echo answers to the voice, so the Lord replied to his request. If you are asking for salvation with all your heart, with your eye on Christ's cross, you shall have it. If you cast yourself before Jesus, and say to him, "If I perish, I will perish at thy piercèd feet," you shall not perish. If you sincerely cry for forgiveness, as the publican did, you shall go down to your house justified.

Note, next, that while he had what he asked for, *it came from him of whom he asked it*—"*Thou* hast delivered my soul from death." We delight to ascribe salvation wholly to our Triune God. Some brethren are a little cloudy in their talk about man's salvation; but when you get to the inner experience of all true believers, they will always tell you that they did not save themselves, and they agree that it was not by their own will or merit that they were saved, but by

the sovereign grace of God alone. The self-righteous may gain deliverance from themselves, or their fellow men; but those whom the Holy Spirit convinces of sin must be delivered by the Lord himself; nothing short of a divine salvation will do for them. "*Thou* hast delivered my soul from death." Mine was a case in which none could help me but thyself, my God. My sorrows demanded omnipotent cordials: only the blood of Jesus and the balm of the Holy Spirit could comfort me.

Note again, that this blessing came consciously to him. "Thou *hast* delivered my soul from death." He does not say, "I hope thou hast;" but, "Thou *hast*." "I know it, I am sure of it, I rejoice in it." And it is not, "I have shared the blessing in common with a great many, and I hope that I have an interest in it." No; but, "Thou *hast* delivered *my* soul from death. If there is not another saved man in the world, I am one." The faith which looks alone to Jesus is an appropriating grace, and enables the soul to say, "He loved *me* and gave himself for *me*." As a dear young friend said to me last Monday night, when I was speaking to her about her soul, "I came to see, sir, that Christ loved me as much as though there was not another man or woman in the world, and laid his life down in my stead, as much as if there was not another sinner that needed his blood to be shed. When I got Christ all to myself then I rejoiced in him; and now," she said, "I want everybody else to have him." It is just so; we must get him ourselves with a holy greediness that fences him about all for ourselves, and then we shall cultivate a large-hearted love for souls and long that every other person may know the same precious Christ. So the psalmist, you see, got what he asked for, it came from him of whom he asked it, and it came consciously *to him*.

But I want you to notice one other thing. *He gained a great deal more than he asked for*. He prayed, "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul," and God delivered his

soul from death, his eyes from tears, and his feet from falling. He asked for one thing, and he obtained it, and two other things besides; for it is our heavenly Father's way to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think. Blessed be his name.

He gained *deliverance from death;* for souls can die though they cannot cease to exist. They die when separated from God, as Adam's soul died in the day when he ate of the forbidden fruit; and as all souls are dead until by union to God they are quickened into spiritual life. Through the grace of God, David was delivered from the death spiritual which reigns within, and the death eternal to which it leads.

His eyes were also cleared from tears. Who is not free from sorrow when he is free from the fear of the death-penalty? Forgiveness brings joy at its heel wherever it comes.

And then, having gained salvation and joy, the Lord gave him *stability.* Those feet that were so apt to slide were set fast, and the fear of future apostasy was removed by the gracious securities which God gave to him that he would never leave him. Thus he had a blessing for his soul, his eyes, and his feet—salvation, joy, and stability.

The last word to be said is this—*these same blessings can be had by others.* If I address any who are now passing through the terrible experience of David, or anything like it, or any who are not passing through any such experience, but, nevertheless, desire life everlasting, I would say to them, remember that the reason why David was heard did not lie in his prayer, or in himself, but it lay in God. Read the verse which follows my first text—the fifth verse: "Gracious is the Lord and righteous; yea, our God is merciful." That is why the Lord heard David's prayer—because he is gracious, and he loves to show grace to sinners. It was also because he is righteous, and therefore keeps his promise. He has made a promise that he will hear prayer, and he has said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just

to forgive us our sins," and, therefore, in mercy and righteousness he will hear us.

Remember, too, that if your distresses are like David's *you may use the same prayer*, because you have the same promises. God's promises are not used up and spent so that they will not avail for you. If a good meal is provided for half-a-dozen people, and they eat it all up, and six more come afterwards, why, they must go without: but with God's promises it is not so; they are fed upon by myriads, and yet they remain the same. Ten thousand souls have fed upon a precious Christ, and received what they wanted from him, and yet ten thousand more may come.

> "Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
> Shall never lose its power,
> Till all the ransomed church of God
> Be saved to sin no more."

Let us remember, then, that we have the same promises and the same God. Let the same prayer be offered by each unconverted one here,—"O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." God's answer to that is, "Believe on my Son, Jesus Christ. Trust him wholly, and thy soul is delivered."

> "All thy sins were laid upon him,
> Jesus bore them on the tree;
> God who knew them laid them on him,
> And believing thou art free."

Trust thou him, and thou art delivered; for thus saith the Lord, "I will deliver his soul from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." Turn your eyes to what Jesus Christ has done. Rest in his finished sacrifice, and go your way rejoicing. May God the Eternal Spirit lead each of you poor sinners to that, and I would entreat you, when he does so, to come and let us know it. Do as the psalmist tells you by his example. Say, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call

upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people." Do not hide his love: confess it to his glory, for the comfort of his people, for the encouragement of his minister and for the strengthening of his church. The Lord be with you, brethren and sisters, for Christ's sake. Amen.

A VOICE FROM HEAVEN.

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."—REVELATION xiv. 12, 13.

THE text speaks of a voice from heaven which said, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." The witness of that voice is not needed upon every occasion, for even the commonest observer is compelled to feel concerning many of the righteous that their deaths are blessed. Balaam, with all his moral shortsightedness, could say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." That is the case when death comes in peaceful fashion. The man has lived a calm, godly, consistent life; he has lived as long as he could well have wished to live, and in dying he sees his children and his children's children gathered around his bed. What a fine picture the old man makes, as he sits up with that snowy head supported by snowy pillows. Hear him as he tells his children that goodness and mercy have followed him all the days of his life, and now he is going to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. See the seraphic smile which lights up his face as he bids them farewell, and assures them that he already hears the harpers harping with their harps,—bids them stay those tears, and weep not for him but for themselves—charges them to follow him so far as he has followed Christ, and to meet him at the right hand of the Judge in the day of his appearing. Then

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the old man, almost without a sigh, leans back, and is present with the Lord.

> "Heaven waits not the last moment; owns her friends
> On this side death, and points them out to men;
> A lecture silent but of sovereign power!
> To vice, confusion—and to virtue peace."

Even the blind bat's-eyed worldling can see that "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" in such a fashion as that, nor is it difficult to perceive that this is the case in many other instances. We have ourselves known several good men and women who were afraid of death, and were much of their lifetime subject to bondage, but they went to bed and fell asleep and never woke again in this world, and as far as appearances go, they could never have known so much as one single pang in departure, but fell asleep among mortals to awake amid the angels. Truly, such gentle loosings of the cable, such fordings of Jordan dry shod, such ascents of the celestial hills with music at every step, are beyond measure desirable, and we need no voice out of the excellent glory to proclaim that blessed are the dead who in such a case die in the Lord.

But that was not the picture which John had before his mind. It was quite another—a picture grim and black to mortal eye. The sounds which meet the ear are not those of music, nor the whispered consolations of friends, but quite the reverse; all is painful, terrible, and the very opposite of blessed, so far as strikes the eye and ear. Hence it became needful that there should be a voice from heaven to say, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." I will give you the picture. The man of God is on the rack. They are turning that infernal machine with all their might; they have dragged every bone from its place; they have exercised their tortures till every nerve of his body thrills with agony. He is flung into a dark and loathsome dungeon, and left there to recover strength enough to be led in derision through the streets. Upon his head they have placed

a cap painted with devils, and all his garments they have bedizened with the resemblance of fiends, and flames of hell. And now, with a shaveling priest on each side holding up before him a superstitious emblem, and bidding him adore the Virgin or worship the cross, the good man, loaded with chains, goes through the street, say of Madrid or Antwerp, to the place prepared for his execution. "An act of faith," they call it—an *auto da fé*—and an act of heroic faith it is indeed when the man of God takes his place at the stake, in his shirt, with an iron chain about his loins, and is fastened to the tree, where he must stand, and burn "quick to the death." Can you see him as they kindle the faggots beneath him, and the flames begin to consume his quivering flesh till he is all ablaze and burning—burning without a cry, though fiercely tormented by the fire? Now assuredly is that voice from heaven wanted, and you can hear it, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,"—blessed even when they die like this. "Here is the patience of the saints," and, in the esteem of angels and of glorified spirits, such a death may under many aspects be adjudged to be more blessed than the peaceful deathbed of the saint who had some fellowship with Jesus, but was not so made to drink of his cup, and to be baptised with his baptism, as to die a painful and ignominious death as a witness for the truth. It must have been a dreadful thing to watch the rabble rout hurrying to Smithfield, to stand there and see the burning of the saints. It would have been a more fearful thing still if possible, to have been in the dungeons of the Low Countries and seen the Anabaptists put to death in secret. In a dungeon dark and pestilential there is placed a huge vat of water, and the faithful witness to Scriptural baptism is drowned, drowned for following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, drowned alone where no eye could pity, and no voice from out of the crowd could shout a word of help and comfort. Men hear only the coarse jests of the murderers who have given the dipper his last dip, but the ear of faith can hear

ringing through the dungeon the voice, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." True, through the connection of their names with a fanatic band, these holy ancestors of ours have gained scant honour here, yet their record is on high; blessed they are, and blessed, they shall be. Wheresoever on this earth, whether among the snows of Piedmont's valleys or in the fair fields of France, saints have died by sword or famine, or fire or massacre, for the testimony of Jesus, because they would not bear the mark of the beast either in their forehead or in their hand, this voice is heard sounding out of the third heavens, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

It matters not, my brethren, where they die who die in the Lord. It may be that they have not the honour of martyrdom in man's esteem, but yet are witnesses for the Lord in poverty and pain. Here is the patience, and here also is the blessedness of the saints. Yonder poor girl lies in a garret, where the stars look between the tiles, and the moon gleams on the ragged hangings of the pallet where she bravely suffers and, without a murmur, gradually dissolves into death. However obscure and unknown she may be, she has been kept from the great transgression; tempted sorely, she has yet held fast her purity and her integrity; her prayers, unheard by others, have gone up before the Lord, and she dies in the Lord, saved through Jesus Christ. None will preach her funeral sermon, but she shall not miss that voice from heaven, saying, "Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

We repeat it, it matters not when you die nor in what condition; if you are in the Lord, and die in the Lord, right blessed are ye.

Now, it is quite certain that very soon every one of us must leave this world. We know that we are no more immortal than our fellow men. Though by a sad piece of imposition upon ourselves we count all men mortal but ourselves, right surely mortal we are, and pass away out of this world each one of us shall, in due time. The

saints themselves must die, though to them death is far other than to sinners. It is greatly wise to be ready for our undressing, prepared for the sweet sleep in Jesus; and if we are not in Christ, it is all the more imperative upon us to consider our latter end, that we rush not forward in the dark. I therefore want, for a few minutes only, to disengage your mind from the too abundant snares of this world, and the thraldom of human cares, that you may look across the border into the great future so surely yours, perhaps so nearly yours. Oh, that you might be helped to prepare for that future, that by such preparation, through divine grace, you may be numbered among the blessed who die in the Lord.

First, we shall briefly *describe their character*, then mention *the rest* which constitutes their blessedness, and conclude by meditating upon *the reward*, which is a further part of that blessedness.

I. First, then, let us describe THE CHARACTER. "Here is the patience of *the saints*." To be blessed when we die we must be saints. By nature we are sinners, and by grace we must become saints if we would enter heaven; for it is the land of saints, and none but saints can ever pass its frontiers. Since death does not change character, we must be made saints here below if we are to be saints above. We have come to misuse the term "saint," and apply it only to some few of God's people. What means it but this—holy? Holy men and holy women—these are saints. It is not *Saint* Peter and *Saint* John merely; you are a saint, dear brother, if you live unto the Lord; you are a saint, my sister, however obscure your name, if you keep the Lord's way, and walk before him in sincere obedience. We must be saints, and in order to be this we must be renewed in spirit, for we are sinners by nature; we must, in fact, be born again. All unholy and unclean, we are by nature nothing else but sin; and we must be created anew by the power of the eternal Spirit, or else holiness will never dwell in us. Our loves must be changed, so that we no longer love evil things, but delight only in

that which is true, generous, kind, upright, pure, godlike. We must be changed in every faculty and power of our nature by that same hand which first made us, and across our brows must be written these words, "Holiness unto the Lord."

The word saint denotes not merely the pure in character, but those who are set apart unto God, dedicated ones, sanctified by being devoted to holy uses—by being, in fact, consecrated to God alone. My dear hearer, do you belong to God? Do you live to glorify Jesus? Can you honestly put your hand on your heart, and say, "Yes, I belong to him who bought me with his blood, and I endeavour by his grace to live as he would have me live. I am devoted to his honour, loving my fellowmen and loving my Lord, endeavouring to be like unto him in all things"? You must be such, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

"But how am I to attain to holiness?" You cannot rise to it save by divine strength. The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier. Jesus who is our justifier is also made unto us sanctification, and if we by faith lay hold on him, we shall find in him all that we want. Let this be a searching matter with every one here present, as I desire to make it with myself, and may God grant we may be numbered with the saints!

But the glorified are also described in our text as *patient* ones,—"Here is the patience of the saints," or, if you choose to render it differently, you may lawfully do so—"Here is the endurance of the saints." Those who are to be crowned in heaven must bear the cross on earth. "No cross, no crown," is still most true. Many would be saints if everybody would encourage them; but as soon as a hard word is spoken they are offended. They would go to heaven if they could travel there amidst the hosannas of the multitude, but when they hear the cry of "Crucify him, crucify him," straightway they desert the man of Nazareth, for they have no intention to share his cross, or to be despised and rejected of men. The true saints of God are prepared to

endure scoffing, and jeering, and scorning; they accept this cross without murmuring, remembering him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself. They know that their brethren who went before "resisted unto blood, striving against sin," and as they have not yet come to that point, they count it foul scorn that they should be ashamed or confounded in minor trials, let their adversaries do what they may. Those who are to sing Christ's praise in heaven must first have been willing to bear Christ's shame below. Numbered with him in the humiliation must they be, or they cannot expect to be partakers with him in the glory. And now, dear brethren and sisters, how is it with us? Are we willing to be reproached for Christ's glory? Can we bear the sarcasm of the wise? Can we bear the jest of the witty? Are we willing to be pointed at as Puritanic, punctilious and precise? Do we dare to be singular when to be singular is to be right? If we can do this by God's grace, let us further question ourselves. Could we endure this ordeal if its intensity were increased? Suppose it came to something worse—to the thumbscrew or the rack, could we then bear it? I sometimes fear that many professors would cut a sorry figure if persecuting times should come; for I observe that to be excluded from what is called "society" is a great grievance to many modern Christians. When they settle in any place, their inquiry is not, "Where can I hear the gospel best?" but "Which is the most fashionable place of worship?" And the question with regard to their children is not "Where will they have Christian associations?" but "How can I introduce them to society?"—introduction to society frequently being an introduction to temptation, and the commencement of a life of levity. Oh, that all Christians could scorn the soft witcheries of the world, for, if they cannot, they may be sure that they will not bear its fiery breath when, like an oven, persecution comes forth to try the saints. God grant us grace to have the patience of the saints; that patience of the saints which will cheerfully

suffer loss rather than do a wrong thing in business; that patience of the saints which will pine in poverty sooner than yield a principle though a kingdom were at stake; that patience of the saints which dreads not being unfashionable if the right be reckoned so; that patience of the saints which courts no man's smile, and fears no man's frown, but can endure all things for Jesus' sake, and is resolved to do so. "Can you cleave to your Lord when the many turn aside? Can you witness that he hath the living word, and none upon earth beside?" Can you watch with him when all forsake him, and stand by him when he is the butt of ribald jest and scorn, and bear the sneer of science, falsely so called, and the politer sarcasm of those who say they "doubt," but mean that they utterly disbelieve? Blessed is that preacher who shall be true to Christ in these evil days. Blessed is that church-member who shall follow Christ's word through the mire and through the slough, o'er the hill and down the dale, caring nothing so that he can but be true to his Master. This must be our resolve. If we are to win the glory we must be faithful unto death. God make us so! "Here is the patience of the saints"—it cometh not by nature; it is the gift of the grace of God.

Farther on these saints are described as "*they that keep the commandments of God.*" This expression is not intended for a moment to teach us that these people are saved by their own merits. They are saints to begin with, and in Christ to begin with, but they prove that they are in Christ by keeping the commandments of God. Let us search ourselves upon this matter. Brethren and sisters, we cannot hope to reach the end if we do not keep the way. No man is so unwise as to think that he would reach Bristol if he were to take the road to York. He knows that to get to a place he must follow the road which leads thither. There is a way of holiness in which the righteous walk, and this way of obedience to the Lord's commands must and will be trodden by all who truly believe in Jesus, and are justified

by faith; for faith works obedience. A good tree brings forth good fruit. If there be no fruit of obedience to God's commands in you, or in me, we may rest assured that the root of genuine faith in Jesus Christ is not in us at all. In this age the keeping of Christ's commandments is thought to be of very little consequence. It is dreadful to think how Christians in the matter of the law of God's house do not even pretend to follow Christ and his appointments. They join a church, and they go by the law of that church, though that church's rule may be clean contrary to the will of Christ; but they answer to everything. "That is our rule, you know." But then who has a right to make rules for you or for me, but Christ Jesus? He is the only legislator in the kingdom of God, and by his commands we ought to be guided. I should not, I could not, feel grieved if brethren arrived at contrary conclusions to mine, I being fallible myself; but I do feel grieved when I see brethren arrive at conclusions, not as the result of investigation, but simply by taking things just as they find them. Too many professors have a happy-go-lucky style of Christianity. Whichever happens to come first they follow. Their fathers and mothers were this or that, or they were brought up in such and such a connection, and that decides them; they do not pray, "Lord, show me what thou wouldst have me to do." Brethren, these things ought not so to be. Has not the Master said, "Whosoever shall break one of the least of these my commandments, and teach men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of heaven"? I would not stand here to condemn my fellow Christians for a moment; in so doing I should condemn myself also, but I plead with you, if you do indeed believe in Jesus, be careful to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded you, for he has said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you;" and again, "If ye love me keep my commandments."

A worldling once said to a puritan, "When so many

great make rents in their consciences, cannot you make just a little nick in yours, for peace sake?" "No," said he, "I must follow Christ fully." "Ah, well," you say, "these things are non-essential." Nothing is non-essential to complete obedience: it may be non-essential to salvation, but it is selfishness to say, "I will do no more than I know to be absolutely necessary to my salvation." It is essential to a good servant to obey his master in all things, and it is essential for the healthiness of a Christian's soul that he should walk very carefully and prayerfully before the Lord, else otherwise he will miss the blessing of them of whom it is said, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." To be blessed in death we must keep the commandments of God.

The next mark of the blessed dead is, that they kept "*the faith of Jesus.*" This is another point upon which I would speak thunderbolts, if I could, for to keep the faith of Jesus is an undertaking much ridiculed now-a-days. "Doctrines!" says one, "we are tired of doctrines."

> "For forms and creeds let graceless bigots fight,
> He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

The opinion is current that to be fluent and original is the main thing in preaching, and provided a man is a *clever* orator it is a proper thing to hear him. The Lord will wither with the breath of his nostrils that cleverness in any man which departs from the simplicity of the truth. There is a gospel, and "there is also another gospel which is not another, but there be some that trouble you." There is a yea yea, and there is a nay nay; and woe unto those whose preaching is yea and nay, for it shall not stand in the great day when the Lord shall try every man's work of what sort it is. Search ye, my brethren, and know what the gospel is, and when you do know it, hold it: hold it as with a hand of iron, and never relax your grasp. Grievous wolves have come in among us, wolves of another sort to what were wont to

be in the churches, yet, verily, after the same fashion they come disguised in sheep's clothing. They use our very terms and phrases, meaning all the while something else; they take away the essentials and vitalities of the faith, and replace them with their own inventions, which they brag of as being more consistent with modern thought and with the culture of this very advanced and enlightened age, which seems by degrees to be advancing, half of it to Paganism with the Ritualists, and the other half of it to Atheism with the Rationalists. From such advances may God save us! May we be enabled to keep the faith, and uphold the truth which we know, by which also we are saved. I, for one, cannot desert the grand doctrine of the atoning blood, the substitutionary work of Christ, and the truths which cluster around it. And why can I not desert these things? Because my life, my peace, my hope, hang upon them. I am a lost man if there be no substitutionary sacrifice, and I know it. If the Son of God did not die, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," I must be damned; and therefore all the instincts of my nature cling to the faith of Jesus. How can I give up that which has redeemed my soul, and given me joy and peace and a hope hereafter? I beseech you, do not waver in your belief, but keep the faith, lest ye be like some in old time, who "made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience," and were utterly cast away. Woe unto those who keep not the doctrines of the gospel, for in due time they forget its precepts also and become utterly reprobate. In departing from Christ men forsake their own mercies both for life and death. The blessed who die in the Lord are those who "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

Notice, that these people *continue faithful till they die.* For it is said, "Blessed are the dead which *die* in the Lord." Final perseverance is the crown of the Christian life. "Ye did run well; what did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" Vain is it to begin to build, we must crown the edifice or all men will deride

us. Helmet and plume, armour and sword, are all assumed for nothing unless the warrior fights on till he has secured the victory.

Those who thus entered into rest, *exercised themselves in labours for Christ.* For it is said, "They rest from *their labours*, and their works do follow them." The idle Christian can have little hope of a reward; he who serves not his Master can scarcely expect that his Master will at the last gird himself and serve him. If I address any here who are not bringing forth fruit unto God, I can say no less than this, "Every tree that bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." The rule is invariable. It must be so. If there be no works and no labours for Christ, no suffering or patient endurance, we lack the main evidence of being the people of God at all.

To close this description of character, these people who die in the Lord *were in the Lord.* That is the great point. They could not have died in the Lord if they had not lived in the Lord. But are we in the Lord? Is the Lord by faith in us? Dear hearer, are you resting upon Jesus Christ only? Is he all your salvation and all your desire? What is your reply to my enquiry? You are not perfect, but Jesus is. Are you hanging upon him as the vessel hangs upon the nail? You cannot expect to stand before God with acceptance in yourself, but are you "accepted in the beloved"? That is the question—"accepted in the beloved." Are you in Christ, and is Christ in you by real vital union, by a faith that is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in your soul? Answer, I charge you, for if you cannot answer these things before one of your own flesh and blood, how will you answer in your soul when the Lord himself shall come?

II. So much with regard to the character. And now a very few words with regard to THE BLESSEDNESS which is ascribed to those who die in the Lord. "They rest from their labours."

By this is meant that the saints in heaven *rest from such labours as they performed here.* No doubt they fulfil service in heaven. It would be an unhappy heaven in which there should be nothing for our activities to spend themselves upon. But such labours as we can do here, will not fall to our lot there. There we shall not teach the ignorant, or rebuke the erring, or comfort the desponding, or help the needy. There we cannot oppose the teacher of error, or do battle against the tempter of youth. There no little children can be gathered at our knee and trained for Jesus, no sick ones can be visited with the word of comfort, no backsliders led back, no young converts confirmed, no sinners converted. They rest from such labours as these in heaven.

They rest from their labours in the sense that they are no longer subject to the *toil* of labour. Whatever they do in heaven will yield them refreshment and never cause them weariness. As some birds are said to rest upon the wing, so do the saints find in holy activity their serenest repose. They serve him day and night in his temple, and therein they rest. Even as on earth by wearing our Lord's yoke we find rest unto our souls, so in the perfect obedience of heaven complete repose is found.

They rest also from the *woe* of labour, for I find the word has been read by some "they rest from their wailing." The original is a word which signifies to beat, and hence, as applied to beating on the breast it indicates sorrow; but the beating may signify conflict with the world, or labour in any form. The sorrow of work for Jesus is over with all the blessed dead. Naught to that place approacheth their sweet peace to molest; they shall no more say that they are sick, neither shall adversity afflict them.

Their rest is perfect. I do not know whether the idea of rest is cheering to all of you, but to some of us whose work exceeds our strength it is full of pleasantness. Some have bright thoughts of service hereafter, and I hope we all have, but to those who have more to do for

Christ than the weary brain can endure,—the prospect of a bath in the ocean of rest is very pleasant.

They rest from their labours. To the servant of the Lord it is very sweet to think that when we reach our heavenly home we shall rest from the *faults* of our labours. We shall make no mistakes there, never use too strong language or mistaken words, nor err in spirit, nor fail through excess or want of zeal. We shall rest from all that which grieves us in the retrospect of our service. Our holy things up there will not need to be wept over, though now they are daily salted with our tears. We shall there rest from the *discouragements* of our labour. There no cold-hearted brethren will damp our ardour, or accuse us of evil motives; no desponding brethren will warn us that we are rash when our faith is strong, and obstinate when our confidence is firm. None will pluck us by the sleeve, and hold us back, when we would run the race with all our might. None will chide us because our way is different from theirs, and none will foretell disaster and defeat when we confidently know that God will give us the victory. We shall also rest from the *disappointments* of labour. Dear brother ministers, we shall not have to go home, and tell our Lord that none have believed our report. We shall not go to our beds sleepless because certain of our members are walking inconsistently, and others of them are backsliding, while those that we thought were converted have gone back again to the world. Here we must sow in tears: there we shall reap in joy. There we shall wear the crown, or rather cast it at the Master's feet; but here we must plunge deep into the sea to fetch up the pearls from the depths that they may be set in the diadem. Here we labour, there we shall enjoy the fruits of toil, where no blight or mildew can endanger the harvest.

It will be a sweet thing to get away to heaven, I am sure, to rest from all *contentions* amongst our fellow Christians. One of the hardest parts of Christ's service is to follow peace, and to maintain truth at the same

time. He is a wise chemist who can in due proportions blend the pure and the peaceable; he is no mean philosopher who can duly balance the duties of affection and faithfulness, and show us how to smite the sin and love the sinner—to denounce the error, and yet to cultivate affection for the brother who has fallen in to it. We shall not encounter this difficulty in yon bright world of truth and love, for both we and our brethren shall be fully taught of the Lord in all things. We shall be free from the clouds and mists of doubt which now cover the earth, and clear of the demon spirits which seek to ruin men's souls beneath the shadow of deadly falsehood. Blessed be God for this prospect! It will be joy indeed to meet no one but a saint, to speak with none but those who use the language of Canaan, to commune with none but the sanctified. Truly blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, if they reach to such a rest as this.

> "To this our labouring souls aspire,
> With ardent pangs of strong desire."

"Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem."

III. The last matter for our consideration is THE REWARD of the blessed dead:—"They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." They do not go before them, they have a forerunner infinitely superior to their works, for Jesus and his finished work have led the way. "I go," says he, "to prepare a place for you." In effect he says to us, "Not your works, but mine; not your tears, but my blood; not your efforts, but my finished work shall lead the van." Where then do our works come? Do they march at our right hand or our left as subjects of cheering contemplation? No, no, we dare not take them as companions to comfort us: they follow us at our heel; they keep behind us out of sight, and we ourselves in our desires after holiness always outmarch them. The Christian should always keep his best services behind, always going beyond them, and

never setting them before his eyes as objects for congratulation. The preacher should labour to preach the best sermons possible, but he must never have them before him so as to cause him, in self-satisfaction, to say, "I have done well;" nor should he have them by his side, as if he rested in them, or leaned upon them, for this were to make antichrists of them. No, let them come behind: that is their proper place. Believers know where to put good works; they do not despise them, they never say a word to depreciate the law, or undervalue the graces of the Holy Spirit, but still they dare not put their holiest endeavours in the room of Christ. Jesus goes before, works follow after.

Note well, that *the works are in existence and are mentioned;* immortality and honour belong to them. The works of godly men are not insignificant or unimportant as some seem to think. They are not forgotten, they are not as the sere leaves of last year's summer; they are full of life, and bloom unfadingly; they follow the saints as they ascend to heaven, even as the silver trail follows in the wake of the vessel. I pictured just now a man burning at the stake; his enemies thought they had destroyed his work, but they only deepened its hold upon the age in which he suffered, and projected his influence into the effect for ages to come. They made a pile of his books, and as they blazed before his eyes they said, "There is an end of you and your heresies." Ah, what fools men have been! Truth is not vanquished with such weapons, nay, nor so much as wounded. Think of the case of Wycliffe, which I need not repeat to you. They threw his ashes into the brook, the brook carried them to the river, and the river to the sea, till every wave bore its portion of the precious relics, just as the influence of his preaching has been felt on every shore. Persecutors concluded beyond all question that they had made an end of a good man's teaching when they had burned him, and thrown away his ashes, but they forgot that truth often gathers a more vigorous life from the death of the man who speaks it, and books once written

have an immortality which laughs at fire. Thousands of infidel and heathen works have gone, so that not a copy is to be found: I hope they never may be unearthed from the salutary oblivion which entombs them: but books written for the Master and his truth, though buried in obscurity are sure of a resurrection. Fifty years ago our old Puritan authors, yellow with age, and arrayed in dingy bindings, wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, but they have been brought forth in new editions, every library is enriched with them, the most powerful religious thought is affected by their utterances, and will be till the end of time. You cannot kill a good man's work, nor a good woman's work either, though it be only the teaching of a few children in the Sunday school. You do not know to whom you may be teaching Christ, but assuredly you are sowing seed which will blossom and flower in the far off ages. When Mrs. Wesley taught her sons, little did she think what they would become. You do not know who may be in your class, my young friend. You may have there a young Whitfield, and if the Lord enable you to lead him to Jesus, he will bring thousands to decision. Ay, at your breast, good woman, there may be hanging one whom God will make a burning and a shining light; and if you train that little one for Jesus your work will never be lost. No holy tear is forgotten, it is in God's bottle. No desire for another's good is wasted, God has heard it. A word spoken for Jesus, a mite cast into Christ's treasury, a gracious line written to a friend—all these are things which shall last when yonder sun has blackened into a coal, and the moon has curdled into a clot of blood. Deeds done in the power of the Spirit are eternal. Therefore, "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Good works follow Christians, and they will be rewarded. The rewards of heaven will be all of grace;

but there will be rewards. You cannot read the Scripture without perceiving that the Lord first gives us good works, and then in his grace rewards us for them. There is a "Well done, good and faithful servant," and there is a proportionate allotment of reward to the man who was faithful with five talents and the man who was faithful with two. You who live for Jesus, may be quite certain that your life will be recompensed in the world to come. I repeat it, the reward will not be of debt, but of grace, but a reward there will be. Oh, the joy of knowing, when you are gone, that the truth you preached is living still! Methinks the apostles since they have been in heaven must often have looked down on the world, and marvelled at the work which God helped twelve poor fishermen to do, and they must have felt a growing blessedness as they have seen nations converted by the truth which they preached in feebleness. What must be the joy of a pastor in glory to find his spiritual children coming in one by one! Methinks, if I may, I shall go down to the gate and linger there to look for some of you. Ay, not a few shall I welcome as my children there, blessed be the name of the Lord; but what a joy it will be! You, teachers—you my good sister, who have brought so many to Christ—I cannot but believe that it shall multiply your heaven to see your dear ones entering it. You will have a heaven in every one of those whose feet you guided thither, you will joy in their joy, and praise the Lord in their praise. No, no, the good old cause shall never die, and the truth shall never perish. As I have lately read many hard things that have been spoken against the gospel, and as in going up and down throughout this land I have seen the nation wholly given to idolatry, I have felt something of the spirit of the Pole who wherever he wanders says to himself, "No, Poland, thou shalt never perish!" Despite the darkness and ill-savour of the times, the gospel nears its triumph. It can never perish. Great men may fall, great reputations may grow obscure, grand philosophies may be cast into the shade,

monstrous infidelities may win popularity, and old superstitions may come back again to darken us; but thy cross, Emmanuel, thy pure and simple gospel, the faith our fathers loved and died for, must continue to be earth's brightest light—her day-star, till the day dawn and the shadows flee away. The vessel of the church can never be wrecked; she rocks and reels in the mad tempest, but she is sound from stem to stern, and her pilot steers her with a hand omnipotently wise. Her bow is in the wave, but see she divides the sea, and shakes off the mountainous billows, as a lion shakes the dew from his mane! Fiercer storms than those of the present have beat upon her, and yet she has kept her eye to the wind, and in the very teeth of hell's tremendous tempests she has ploughed her glorious way: and so she will till she reaches her appointed haven. The Lord liveth and the Lord reigneth, and Christ from the tree has gone to the throne—from Gethsemane and Golgotha up to the glory; and all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth. We have nothing to do but to go on preaching the gospel and baptising in his name, according to his bidding; and the day shall come when the might with the right and the truth shall be, and the right hand of Jesus with the iron rod shall break his adversaries, and reward his friends. The Lord own every one of us as being on his side; and if we are not on that side, oh, that we may speedily become so by repentance and faith! May the Lord turn us, and we shall be turned; for if "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," depend upon it, cursed are they that die out of Christ—ay, cursed with a curse, and their works shall follow them or go before them, unto judgment, to their condemnation. May infinite mercy save us from being howled at by our works in the next world, save us from being hunted down by the wolves of our past sins, risen from the dead; for, except we are forgiven, our transgressions will rise from the grave of forgetfulness, and gather around us, and tear us in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver.

May we fly even now to Jesus, and through faith in his blood be delivered from all evil that we also may have it said of us, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

The Lord bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT, THE SECRET TOKEN OF THE SONS OF GOD.

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—ROMANS viii. 14.

CHILDREN are expected to bear some likeness to their parent. Children of God, born of the grandest of all parents, regenerated by the almighty energy of the divine Spirit, are sure to bear a high degree of likeness to their heavenly Father. We cannot be like God in many of his divine attributes, for they are unique and incommunicable: it is not possible for us to wield his power, or to possess his infinite knowledge, neither can we be independent and self-existent, or possessors of sovereignty or worshipfulness. Man can never be so expressly the image of the Father as Jesus is, for he is in a mysterious sense the only begotten Son of God. We can imitate God, however, in many of his attributes; mainly those of a moral and spiritual kind. We must in these qualities be "imitators of God as dear children," or our heavenly pedigree cannot be made out. The point mentioned in the text must never be matter of question, for if that be doubtful our filial relationship to God is unproved. We must be "led by the Spirit of God." That divine Spirit who is ever with the Father and the Son must be evermore with us so that we are guided, instructed, impelled, quickened, actuated, influenced by him, or else we must not dare to think ourselves the sons of God.

The idea of a divine fatherhood extending over all mankind does not appear to have been recognised by

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Delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

the apostle Paul, in this text at any rate. Here the fatherhood is for some, not for all, and the text discriminates between the "as many as are led by the Spirit of God" and the rest of mankind who are under no such influence. In men who are devoid of the Holy Ghost there is another spirit, and that other spirit marks them out as sons of another father: "they are of their father the devil, for his works they do." There have been two seeds from the beginning, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, and it is both untrue and immoral to believe that God stands in the same relation to the two opposing families. No, my brethren, *our* Father who is in heaven is not to be claimed as father by the unbeliever, for to them Jesus expressly says, "If God were your Father, ye would love me."

The text furnishes us with a very simple but sharp and decisive test, which we shall do well to use upon ourselves. It should be employed to try every one of us. If it had said, "As many as have been baptised are the sons of God," we might have been content to sit very easily in our places. If it had said, "As many as eat and drink at the holy feast of Christian fellowship are the children of God," we might have remembered how short a time ago we were sitting with the saints around the communion table. If the doing of certain external acts, or the utterance of certain prayers, or the avowal of orthodox principles, or abstinence from the grosser vices, had been made the royal mark and heavenly seal of the children of God we might have taken our ease after ascertaining that we are correct as to these things. If being united with an earnest church, and being members of a faithful community, had been divinely ordained to be an unquestionable certificate of sonship with the Lord Most High, we might have rested perfectly satisfied without putting ourselves into the crucible: but, since these things are not so arranged, I trust that none of us will be so unwise as to neglect the examination which the text suggests to every prudent mind. Come, my brethren, take nothing for granted on so

weighty a business as your soul's eternal interests, but search for evidence and see to the matter as wise householders would do if their whole substance were at stake. Those who are "led by the Spirit of God" are the sons of God; those who are not led by the Spirit of God are not his sons: therefore search and see what spirit is in you, that ye may know whose children ye are.

To help you in this matter I purpose that we should consider, first, where it is that the Spirit of God leads men, that we may see whether he has ever led us there.

I. WHITHER DOES THE SPIRIT OF GOD LEAD THE SONS OF GOD?

First of all, he leads them to *repentance*. One of the first acts of the Holy Spirit is to guide the sons of God to the mercy seat with tears in their eyes. He leads us into the abominable chambers of imagery concealed within our fallen nature, unfastens door after door and sets open before our enlightened eyes the secret places polluted with idols and loathsome images portrayed upon the wall. He points out with his hand of light the idol gods, the images of jealousy, the unclean and abominable things within our nature, and thus he astonishes us into humility. We could not have believed that such evil things haunted our souls, but his discoveries undeceive us and correct our boastful estimates of ourselves. Then, with that same finger, he points to our past life and shows us the blots, the errors, the wilful sins, the sins of ignorance, the aggravated transgressions, the offences against light and knowledge, which have marred our career from our youth up: and whereas, previously, we looked upon the page of our life, and thought it fair, when the Spirit has led us into light we see how black our history has been, and, being filled with shame and sorrow, we cry out for the ear of God, that we may there confess our sin, and acknowledge that if he should smite us into hell it would be no more than we deserve. Dear friend, did the Holy Spirit ever lead you to the stool of repentance? Did he ever cause you to see how basely you

have treated your God, and how shamefully you have neglected your Saviour? Did he ever make you bemoan yourself for your iniquities? There is no way to heaven but by Weeping-cross. He who never felt the burden of his sin will yet be crushed beneath its enormous weight when, like some tottering cliff, in judgment's dreadful hour, it will fall upon him and grind him to powder. No man ever goes to the chamber of true repentance till the Holy Spirit leads him there, but every child of God knows what it is to look on him whom he has pierced, and mourn for his sin. Holy sorrow for sin is as indispensable as faith in the atoning blood, and the same Spirit who gives us peace through the great sacrifice also works in us a hearty grief for having grieved the Lord. If you have from your youth up never felt any special mourning for sin, then may God begin the gracious work in your heart, for salvation is certainly not wrought in you. You must have repentance, for repentance is absolutely necessary to the divine life. "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." The prodigal must cry, "Father, I have sinned;" the publican must smite on his breast and pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner." As well destroy one of the valves of the heart and yet hope to live as take away repentance, which is the inseparable life-companion of faith. A dry-eyed faith is no faith at all. When a man has his face towards Jesus his back is necessarily turned on his sins. As well look for spring in the garden without the snowdrop as look for grace in the heart without penitence. That faith which is not accompanied by repentance is a spurious faith, and not the faith of God's elect; for no man ever trusts Christ till he feels he needs a Saviour, and he cannot have felt that he needs a Saviour unless he has been wearied with the burden of his sin. The Holy Ghost leads men first to repentance.

He leads them at the same time, while they think little of themselves, to *think much of Jesus.* Were you ever led to the cross, beloved? Did you ever stand

there, and feel the burden fall from off your shoulders, and roll away into the Redeemer's sepulchre? When Dr. Neale, the eminent Ritualist, took John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," and Romanized it, he represented the pilgrim as coming to a certain bath, into which he was plunged and washed, and then his burden was washed away. He explains this to be the bath of baptism, though I have never yet seen in any Ritualistic church a baptistry large enough to wash a pilgrim in. However, according to this doctored edition of the allegory, Christian was washed in the laver of baptism, and all his sins were thus removed. That is the High Church mode of getting rid of sin: John Bunyan's way, and the true way, is to lose it at the cross. Now, mark what happened. According to Dr. Neale's "Pilgrim's Progress," that burden grew again on the pilgrim's back, and I do not wonder that it did, for a burden which baptism can remove is sure to come again: but the burden which is lost at the cross never appears again for ever. There is no effectual cleansing for sin except by faith in that matchless atonement offered once for all on Calvary's bloody tree, and as many as are led there by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. The Spirit of God never led a man to think little of Christ, and much of priests. The Spirit of God never led a man to think little of the atoning blood and of simple faith in it, and much of outward forms and ceremonies. The Spirit of God sinks the man and lifts up the Saviour, lowers flesh and blood into the grave, and gives to man new life in the risen Lord, who also hath ascended up on high. "He shall glorify me," said Christ of the Comforter; and that indeed is the Comforter's office.

Now, my dear friends, has the Spirit ever made the Lord Jesus glorious in your eyes? Brethren and sisters, this is the one point above all others. If the Holy Ghost has never made Christ precious to you, you know nothing about him. If he has not lifted Jesus up and sunk your own confidences, if he has not made you feel that Christ is all you want, and that more than all in

him you find, then he has never wrought a divine change in your heart. Repentance and faith must stand gazing upon the bleeding Saviour, or else hope will never join them and bring peace as his companion.

When the Spirit has glorified Jesus he leads us to know *other truths*. The Holy Ghost leads the sons of God into all truth. Others go astray after this falsehood or that, but the sheep of God will not hear the voice of strange leaders, their ears are closed to their flatteries: "a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." Beloved, no lie is of the truth, and no man who receives a lie has been led by the Spirit of God into it, let him say what he may. On the other hand, truth is like a closed chamber to the unregenerate man; he may read the table of contents of the precious storehouse, but into that secret room he cannot enter: there is one that hath the key of David, who openeth and no man shutteth; and the key with which he openeth is the power of the Holy Ghost. When he opens up a doctrine to a man, the man learns it aright, but he never can know it else. You may go to college, and sit at the feet of the most learned Gamaliel of the day, but you can never know the truth in the heart unless the Holy Ghost shall teach you. We never know a truth in the power of it till it is burned into our soul, as with a hot iron, by an experience of its power, or engraven as upon brass by the mystic revelation of the Spirit. Only the Spirit of God can interweave the truth with the heart, and make it part and parcel of ourselves, so that it is in us and we are in it. Have you thus been led into the truth? It so, give God the glory, for thus the Spirit of God certifies your adoption.

The children of God are led not only into knowledge, but into *love*. They are brought to feel the warmth of love as well as to see the light of truth. The Spirit of God causes every true-born son of God to burn with love to the rest of the family. He who is a stranger to Christian love is a stranger to divine grace. Brethren,

we have our disputes, for we dwell where it must needs be that offences come; but we would be slow to take offence and slower still to give it, for we are one in Christ Jesus, and our hearts are knit together by his Spirit. I take it that no honest man ought to hold his tongue concerning any of the errors of the day, it is a mean way of cultivating ease for yourself, and gaining a popularity not worth the having; we must speak the truth whether we offend or please, but this is to be done *in* love and *because* of love. God save us from that suggestion of Satan which advises us to speak only those soft things which please men's ears, for he who gives way to this persuasion is a traitor to truth and to the souls of men. The true man of God must speak against every evil and false way; but there beats in his heart a strong affection to every child of God, whatever his errors and his faults may be. The knife of the surgeon is mercifully cruel to the cancer, not out of ill-will to his patient, but out of an honest desire to benefit him; such affectionate faithfulness we have need to cultivate. Love to the saints is the token of the saints. There is an inner church of God's own elect, within every one of the Christian denominations, and this church is made up of men spiritually enlightened, who know the marrow and mystery of the gospel, and whenever they meet, however diversified may be their views, they recognise one another by a sort of sacred freemasonry, the one Spirit which quickens them all alike leaps within them as it recognises the one life in the bosoms of others. Despite their mental divergences, ecclesiastical associations, and doctrinal differences, spiritual men no sooner hear the password, and catch the mystic sign, than they cry, "Give me thy hand, my brother, for my heart is even as thy heart. The Spirit of God has led me and he has led thee, and in our way we tread step by step together; therefore let us have fellowship with each other." The outsiders of the camp, the mixed multitude that come up out of Egypt with our Israel, fall both into fighting and lusting; but the children of the living

God, who make the central body-guard of the ark of the Lord, are one in heart with each other, and must be so. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

The Holy Spirit leads us into *intense love for the souls of sinners*. If any man shall say, "It is no business of mine whether men are lost or saved," the Spirit of God never led him into such inhumanity. Bowels of iron have never felt the touch of the Spirit of Love. If ever a preacher's spirit and teaching legitimately lead you to the conclusion that you may view the damnation of your fellow men with complacency or indifference, you may be sure that the Spirit of God never led him or you in that direction. The devil has more to do with some men's pitiless theology than they imagine. Christ's eyes wept over the sinner's doom, may the Lord save us from thinking of it in any other spirit. He who does not love his fellow man whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? Does God look with complacency upon the ruin of our race? Did he not love men so well that he gave his only begotten Son for them? And will he have his own children cold, stoical, and indifferent to the loss of human souls? Beloved, if we dwell with Cain and cry, "Am I my brother's keeper?" the Spirit of God never led us there; he leads us into tenderness, sympathy, compassion, and tearful effort, if by any means we may save some.

Further, the Spirit of God leads the sons of God into *holiness*. I shall not attempt to define what holiness is. That is best seen in the lives of holy men. Can it be seen in your lives? Beloved, if you are of a fierce, unforgiving spirit, the Holy Ghost never led you there; if you are proud and hectoring, the Holy Ghost never led you there; if you are covetous, and lustful after worldly gain, the Holy Ghost never led you there; if you are false in your statements, and unjust in your actions, the Holy Ghost never led you there. If I hear of a professor of religion in the ball-room or the theatre

I know that the Holy Ghost never led him there; if I find a child of God mixing with the ungodly, using their speech, and doing their actions, I am persuaded the Holy Ghost never led him there. But if I see a man living as Christ would have lived, loving and tender, fearless, brave, honest, in all things minding to keep a good conscience before God and men, I hope that the spirit of God has led him; if I see that man devout before his God, and full of integrity before his fellow men, then I hope and believe that the Spirit of God is his leader and influences his character. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." I do not wish to speak sharply, but I feel that I must speak plainly, and I feel bound to say that there is far too much hypocrisy among professing Christian people. Many wear the name of Christian, and have nothing else that is Christian about them. It is sorrowful that it should be so, but so it is; false professors have lowered the standard of Christian character, and made the church so like the world that it is hard to say where one begins and the other ends. We exercise church discipline as best we can, but for all that there is a seed of mischief which does not develope into open and overt sin which we cannot remove by discipline, for we are forbidden to root up the tares lest we root up the wheat with them. Men and brethren, we must be holy! It is of no use our talking about being orthodox in belief: we must be orthodox in life, and, if we are not, the soundest creed will only increase our damnation. I hear men boast that they are Nonconformists to the backbone, as if that were the essential matter: better far be Christians to the heart. What is the use of ecclesiastical Nonconformity if the heart is still conformed to the world? Another man will glory that he is a Conformist, but what is the good of that unless he is conformed to the image of Christ? Holiness is the main consideration, and if we are not led into it

by the Spirit of Holiness neither are we the sons of God.

Furthermore, the Holy Ghost leads those who are the children of God into *vital godliness*—the mystic essence of spiritual life. For instance, the Holy Ghost leads the saints to prayer, which is the vital breath of their souls. Whenever they get true access to the mercy-seat it is by his power. The Holy Spirit leads them to search the word, and opens their understandings to receive it; he leads them into meditation, and the chewing of the cud of truth; he leads them into fellowship with himself and with the Son of God. He lifts them right away from worldly cares into heavenly contemplations; he leads them away to the heavenly places, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and where his saints reign with him. Beloved, have you ever felt these leadings? I am talking of them, but do *you* understand them? Are these things matters of constant experience with you? It is easy to say, "Yes, I know what you mean." Have you felt them? Are these every-day things with you, for, as the Lord liveth, if you have not been led into prayer, and into communion with God, the Spirit of God is not in you, and you are none of his?

The Spirit of God, moreover, leads the sons of God into *usefulness*, some in one path, and some in another, while a few are conducted into very eminent service, and into self-consecration of the highest order. We bless God for missionaries who have been led of the Spirit of God among the wildest tribes to preach Jesus Christ. We thank God for holy women, who, at home, have been led into the darkest parts of this city to labour amongst the most fallen and depraved, to lift up Christ before them that he might lift them up to himself. Blessed are those men and women who are led by the Spirit of God into labours more abundant, for the more abundant shall be their joy. Methinks I ought to remind you all that if you are doing nothing for Jesus the Spirit of God has never led you into this idleness. If you eat the fat and drink the sweet in the house of

God, but never do a hand's turn for the household, the Spirit of God cannot have taught you this abominable sloth. There is a something for every one of us to do, a talent committed to the charge of every believer, and if we have the Spirit of God dwelling in us he will tell us what the Lord has appointed us to perform, he will strengthen us for the doing of it, and set his seal and blessing upon it when it is done. Those dead branches of the vine which yield no clusters for the Lord, either by patience in suffering or activity in working, have no evidence that they are of the household of faith. Those who take no part in labours for Jesus can hardly hope that they will ultimately be partakers in his glory with him.

Thus have I, in a plain manner, without diving too deep into the matter, given you an answer to the question, "Whither does the Spirit of God lead the sons of God?"

II. I shall now answer another question with still greater brevity—How does the Spirit lead the sons of God?

The reply would be this: *the Spirit of God operates upon our spirits mysteriously.* We cannot explain his mode of operation, except that we shall probably be right if we conclude that he operates upon our spirits somewhat in the same way in which our spirits operate upon other men's spirits, only after a nobler sort. Now, how do I influence the spirit of my friend? I do it usually by imparting to him something which I know, which I hope will have power over his mind by suggesting motives to him, and so influencing his acts. I cannot operate upon my neighbour's mind mechanically; no tool can touch the heart, no hand can shape the mind. We act upon matter by machinery, but upon mind by argument, by reason, by instruction, and so we endeavour to fashion men as we desire. *One great instrument which the Holy Ghost uses upon the mind is the word of God.* The word, as we have it printed in the Bible, is the great instrument in the hand of the Spirit

for leading the children of God in the right way. If you want to know what you ought to do, say as the old Scotchman used to say to his wife, "Reach down yon Bible." That is the map of the way, the heavenly pilgrim's knapsack guide; and if you are led by the word of God the Spirit of God is with the word, and works through it, and you are led by the Spirit of God. Quote chapter and verse for an action, and, unless you have wrested the passage, you may rest assured you have acted rightly. Be sure that such and such a thing is a command of God written in the book, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and you do not need a voice of thunder from heaven or an angelic whisper, you have a more sure word of prophecy, unto which you will do well if you take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.

The Spirit of God also speaks through his ministers. The word preached is often blest, as well as the word written, but this can only be the case when the word preached is in conformity with the word written. At times God's ministers seem to give the written word its own voice, so that it sounds forth as if just spoken by the seer who originally received it. As they speak it drops into the ear like honey from the comb, it leaps forth like water from the well-head; and at such times goes into the heart fresh and warm, with even a greater energy than when we read it alone in our chamber. How often do we feel when we read a truth in a book (even though that book is God's word) our sluggish condition prevents its having such power over us as it has when a man of God who has experienced it, and tasted it, and handled it, speaks of it as the outpouring of his own soul. May God grant that the ministry which you usually attend may be to you the voice of God. May it be guidance to your feet, comfort to your heart, invigoration to your faith, and refreshment to your soul, and while you are sitting in the house of prayer may you feel, "That word is for me: I came here not knowing what to do, but I have received direction; I was faint and weary, but I have obtained consolation

and strength. The voice of the pastor has been as the oracle of God to my soul, and now I go my way comforted as Hannah did when the Lord's servant had spoken peace to her soul."

Upon another point I would speak with great caution, and would have you think of it with more caution still, for it is a matter which has been sadly abused and turned to fanatical purposes. The Spirit of God does, I believe, *directly, even apart from the word, speak in the hearts of the saints.* There are inward monitions which are to be devoutly obeyed, guidances mysterious and secret, which must be implicitly followed. It is not a subject for common talk, but is meant for the ear of the intelligent believer who will not misunderstand us. There will come to you sometimes, you know not why, certain inward checks, such as Paul received when he essayed to go into Mysia, but the Spirit suffered him not. There is a certain act which you might do or might not do, but an impulse comes upon you which seems to say, "Not that, or not now." Do not violate that inward restraint. "Quench not the Spirit." At another time a proper thing, a fit thing, will have been forgotten by you for a time, but it comes upon you strongly that it is to be done at once, and for some reason you cannot shake off the impression. Do no violence to that impulse. It is not to every man that the Holy Ghost speaks in such a way; but he has his favoured ones, and these must jealously guard the privilege, for perhaps if they are deaf when he speaks he may never speak to them any more in that way. If we render reverent obedience to divine monitions they will become far more common with us. "Why," says one, "you run into Quakerism." I cannot help that. If this is Quakerism I am so far a Quaker: names do not concern me one way or another. You each one know whether your personal experience gives confirmation to what I have advanced or otherwise, and there let the question end; for, mark you, I advance this with caution, and do not set up such monitions as indispensable signs of a son

of God. There is a story told (and many such some of us could tell almost as striking) of a certain friend who one night was influenced to take his horse from the stable, and ride some six or seven miles to a certain house where lived a person whom he had never seen. He arrived at dead of night, knocked at the door, and was answered by the master of the house, who seemed to be in great confusion of mind. The midnight visitor said, "Friend, I have been sent to thee, I know not why, but surely the Lord has some reason for having sent me to thee. Is there anything peculiar about thy circumstances?" The man, struck with amazement, asked him to come upstairs, and there showed him a halter tied to a beam. He was putting the rope about his neck to commit suicide when a knock sounded at the door, he resolved that he would go down and answer the call, and then return and destroy himself; but the friend whom God had sent talked to him, brought him to a cooler mind, and helped him in the pecuniary difficulty which embarrassed him, and the man lived to be an honourable Christian man. I solemnly declare that monitions equally powerful have guided me, and their results have been remarkable to me at any rate. For the most part these are secrets between God and my own soul, neither am I eager to break the seal and tell them to others. There are too many swine about for us to be very lavish with our pearls. If we were obedient to such impulses if we did not save suicides we might save souls, and might often be in the hands of God as angels sent from heaven: but we are like the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle; we are not tender enough to be sensitive to the divine influence when it comes, and so the Lord does not please to speak to many of us in this way so frequently as we could desire. Still, it is true that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God," however he may lead them, "they are the sons of God."

Let me here remark that being "*led* by the Spirit of

God" is a remarkable expression. It does not say, "As many as are driven by the Spirit of God." No, the devil is a driver, and when he enters either into men or into hogs he drives them furiously. Remember how the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea. Whenever you see a man fanatical and wild, whatever spirit is in him it is not the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of Christ is forcible, it worketh mightily, but it is a quiet Spirit; it is not an eagle, but a dove. He comes as a rushing wind, and fills the house where the disciples are sitting, but at the same time he comes not as a whirlwind from the wilderness to smite the four corners of the habitation, or it would become a ruin. He comes as a flame of fire sitting upon each of the favoured ones, but it is not a flame of fire that burns the house and destroys Jerusalem. No, the Spirit of God is gentle; he does not drive, but lead. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The Spirit treats us honourably in thus working; he does not deal with us as with dumb, driven cattle, or soulless waves of the sea; he treats us as intelligent beings, made for thought and reflection. He leads us as a man guideth his child, or as one leadeth his fellow, and we are honoured by subjecting our minds and wills to so divine a Spirit. Never is the will truly free until the Holy Ghost sweetly subdues it to willing obedience.

Thus the Spirit of God works, though we cannot explain the method, for that is a thing too wonderful for us, and sooner may we know the path of an eagle in the air, or the way of a serpent upon a rock. As we cannot walk in search of the springs of the sea, so is this also hidden from all living. We have said somewhat upon the subject, and, as far as we can, have answered the question, "How does the Spirit of God lead the children of God?" but we are of yesterday, and know nothing, and, therefore, confessing our ignorance, we pass on.

III. The last question is, WHEN DOES THE SPIRIT

LEAD THE SONS OF GOD? Ah, brethren, that question needs anxious answering.

The Spirit of God *would* always lead the sons of God, but, alas, there are times when even children of God will not be led. They are wilful and headstrong, and start aside. The healthy condition of a child of God is to be always led by the Spirit of God. Mark this—led by the Spirit every day; not on Sundays only, nor alone at periods set apart for prayer, but during every minute of every hour of every day. We ought to be led by the Spirit in little things as well as in great matters, for, observe, if we were led by the Spirit all our lives in all other matters, yet, if only one action apart from the Spirit were suffered to run to its full results, it would ruin us. The mercy is that the Lord restoreth our souls; but there is never a single hour when a Christian can afford to wander from the way of the Spirit. If you have a guide along an intricate pathway, and you allow him to conduct you for half an hour, and then say, "Now, I shall direct myself for the next five minutes," in that short space you will lose the benefit of having a guide at all. It is clear that a pilot who only occasionally directs the ship is very little better than none. If you are traversing an unknown and difficult pathway it would render all directions useless if you were to say, "They told me to turn to the right at this corner, but I mean to try the left." That one turning will affect the whole of your after journey. If we err, and are really sons of God, our divine leader will make us retrace our steps with bitter tears, and feel what an evil and bitter thing it is to have chosen our own delusions. If we use our divine leader wisely we shall always follow him. Child of God, the Spirit must lead you in everything. "Well, but," say you, "*will* he?" Ah, "Will he?" Yes, to your astonishment. When you are in difficulties, consult the Holy Spirit in the Word. Hear what God speaks in the inspired volume, and if no light comes from thence kneel down and pray. When you see a sign-post in a

country road, and it tells you which way to go, you are glad to follow its directions; but if in your perplexities you see no sign-post, what are you to do? *Pray.* Cast yourself upon the divine guidance, and you shall make no mistake; for even if you happen to pick the roughest road it will be the right one if you have selected it with holy caution, and in the fear of God. Beloved, the Lord will never let a vessel be dashed upon the rocks whose tiller has been given into his hands. Give up the helm to God, and your barque will thread the narrow winding channel of life, avoid every sandbank and sunken rock, and arrive safely at the fair havens of eternal bliss.

The question—when are the sons of God led by the Spirit? is to be answered thus,—when they are as they should be they are always distinctly led by him; and though, owing to sin in them, they are not always obedient to the same degree, yet the power which usually influences their lives is the Spirit of God.

Now I close, using the text thus. First as a *test.* Am I a child of God? If so, I am led by the Spirit. Am I led by the Spirit? I am afraid some of you never think of that matter. By whom are you led? Hundreds of religious people are led by their minister or by a Christian friend, and so far so good for them; but their religion will be a failure unless they are led by the Spirit. Let me put the question again that you may not shirk it,—Are you led by the Spirit? If you are you are a child of God, and if not you are none of his.

That gives me a second use of the text, namely, the use of *consolation.* If you are a child of God you will be led by the Spirit. Now, are you in doubt to-night? Are you embarrassed? Are you in difficulties? Then the sons of God are led by the Spirit, and you will be led. Perhaps you are looking a long way ahead, and you are afraid of difficulties in your old age, or at the death of a relative. Now, God has not given us eyes to pry into the future, and what is the use of our peering where we cannot see? Leave it all to your heavenly

Father; and you will be unerringly led by the Holy Ghost. When you come to the place where you thought there would be a difficulty, very likely there will be none. "Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" said the holy women, but when they came to the sepulchre, lo, the stone was rolled away already. Go on as a child of God, walking by faith, with the full assurance that the path of faith, if not an easy one, will always be a safe one; and all will be well, and you will be led in a right way to a city of habitations.

The last word of all is, the text is an *assurance.* If you are led by the Spirit of God then you are most certainly a son of God. Can you say to-night, "I do yield myself up to the Lord's will. I am not perfect, I wish I were; I am burdened with a thousand infirmities, but yet if the Lord will teach me I am willing to learn, if he will have patience with me I will strive to follow him. Oh, what would I give to be perfectly holy! I long to be pure within. I wish above all things else in this world that I may never grieve my God, but walk with him in the light as he is in the light, and have fellowship with him, while the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses me from sin"? My brother, be well assured that none ever longed like that but a child of God. Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee. No soul, except an heir of heaven, ever had such wishings, and aspirings, and groanings after holiness, and such sorrowings over failures and mistakes. The text does not say, "He who runs in the Spirit is a son of God," but he that is *led* by the Spirit of God. Now, we may stumble whilst we are being led; a man may go very slowly while he is being led; he may go on crutches while he is being led; he may crawl on his hands and knees while he is being led: but none of these absolutely prevent his being truly led. With all your weaknesses and infirmities, the point is—Are you led by the Spirit of God? If you are, all your infirmities and failures are forgiven you for Christ's name's sake,

and your being led is the mark of your being born from above. Go home and rejoice in your sonship, and pray God if you have been weak to make you strong, if you have been lame to heal you, and, if you have crept along on your hands and knees, to help you to walk uprightly; but, after all, bless him that his Spirit does lead you. If you can only walk, ask him to make you run; and if you can run, ask him to make you mount on wings as eagles. Do not be satisfied with anything short of the highest attainments; and, at the same time, if you have not reached them, do not despair. Remember that in most families there are babes as well as men and women: the little child in long clothes carried in the arms, and laid on the breast, is just as dear to the parent as the son who in the fulness of his manhood marches by his father's side, and takes his share in the battle of life. You are sons of God if you are led by the Spirit, however small your stature and feeble your grace. The age, strength, or education of the man are not essential to his sonship, but the trueness of his birth is the all-important matter. See ye to it that ye are led by the Spirit, or your parentage is not from above.

If you have been condemned by this sermon, then fly away to Jesus, and penitently and trustfully rest in him. May the Spirit of God lead you to do that, and you are then a child of God. May he bless you now. Amen.

THE SURE TRIUMPH OF THE CRUCIFIED ONE.

"Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee: his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider."—ISAIAH lii. 13–15.

MODERN Jewish writers refuse to see the Messiah in this passage, but their predecessors were not so blind. The Targum and the ancient Rabbins interpreted it of the Messiah, and indeed all attempts to explain it apart from him are palpable failures. Christian commentators in all ages have seen the Lord Jesus here. How could they do otherwise? To whom else could the prophet have referred? If the Man of Nazareth, the Son of God, be not right visible in these three verses, they are dark as midnight itself. We do not hesitate for a moment in applying every word to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear brethren, when our Lord ascended on high he gave us this commission "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Our duty is to obey that command, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear; the commission is unconditional, and is not dependent upon our success. If up to this date, 1875, there had never been a solitary convert through Christian ministry, if the whole of the church of God had hitherto laboured in vain, and the succession of saints had only been kept up by miracle, it would not affect our duty one iota. Our business is to preach the gospel, even to those who are aroused to persecution thereby.

Delivered on Sunday morning, April 25, 1875, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

We are to sow, whether a harvest follow or not. Success is with God; service belongs to us. I believe, therefore, that true faith, when it is in a healthy condition, will enable us to go plodding on, carefully scattering the seed, even by the wayside and on stony places; yet there is flesh about us all, and faith is not always unalloyed with sight, and consequently we occasionally flag and almost faint if we do not see some present usefulness. This passage may cheer us if we fear that we have spent our strength for naught, for such certainly was the condition of the church of God at the time when this passage was addressed to it. There is a break made in our version between the 52nd and 53rd chapters, but no such break should have been made, and if we read straight on we shall see that these consoling words are meant for mourning workers. We hear even prophets saying, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Even the bravest of the prophets lamented that the offence of the cross hindered men from seeing the comeliness of the Messiah. All glorious as he was to the prophets when they beheld his substitutionary griefs, he was not understood by the multitudes who only saw in him a man smitten of God and afflicted, having no beauty that they should desire him. To support them under circumstances so dispiriting there comes in this comfortable word of our text, in which the marred visage and disfigured form of the great servant of the Lord are fully recognised, and yet the voice of the Lord declares that the shame and contempt caused thereby will be temporary, and the ultimate result will be sure; the issue of the great scheme of redemption is by no means uncertain, his cause must prosper, his throne must be established, and the will of the Lord must be done. Let us brace ourselves up this morning with the delightful prospect of the predestinated triumph of the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

In handling our text we shall note, first, that, directing us to the Lord Jesus Christ, it dwells upon *the character of his dealings*,—"My servant shall deal prudently, he

shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high." Then, secondly, it mentions *the stumbling-block which lies in his way*, the great hindrance to the progress of his work: "Many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." Thirdly, we see in the verses before us *the certainty of the removal of this hindrance:* "He shall sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him." And, fourthly, *the manner of its accomplishment*, namely, by instruction in the gospel: "For that which had not been told them they shall see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider."

1. THE CHARACTER OF OUR LORD'S DEALINGS. He is called in the text, "*My servant*," a title as honourable as it is condescending. The Lord Jesus has undertaken in infinite love to become the servant of the Father for our sakes, and he is a servant like unto Moses, who was set over the Lord's house to manage the affairs of the dispensation. Jesus, though a Son and therefore Lord, has deigned to become the great servant of God under the present economy; he conducts the affairs of the household of God, and it is said in the text, and it is to that we have to draw attention, that *he deals prudently*. He who took upon him the form of a servant acts as a wise servant in everything; and indeed it could not be otherwise, for "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." This prudence was manifest in the days of his flesh, from his childhood among the doctors in the temple on to his confession before Pontius Pilate. Our Lord was enthusiastic; there was a fire burning within him which nothing could quench, he found his meat and drink in doing his Father's will; but that enthusiasm never carried him into rashness, or forgetfulness of sound reason; he was as wise and prudent as the most cold-hearted calculator could have been. Our Saviour was full of love, and that love made him frank and open-hearted; no frigid reserve kept him at a distance from the people, or shrouded him in a cloud of

mystery, he was a man among men, transparent, child-like, "the holy child Jesus"; but for all that he was ever prudent, and "committed himself unto no man, for he knew what was in man." Too many who aspire to be leaders of the people study policy, craft, and diplomacy, and think it needful to use language as much for the concealment as for the declaration of their thoughts; such men watch their own words till their very soul seems withered within them. The Friend of sinners had not a fraction of that thing about him; and yet he was wiser and more prudent than if diplomacy had been his study from his youth up. You see his wisdom when he baffles his adversaries; they think to entangle him in his speech, but he breaks their snares asunder as with a wave of our hand we sweep cobwebs from our path. You see his wisdom when he deals with his friends: he has many things to say unto them, but he perceives that they cannot bear them; he, therefore, does not overload their intellects, lest undigested truth should breed mischief in their souls. Little by little, like the increasing brightness of the dawn, he lets light into their souls, lest their eyes should utterly fail before the brilliance thereof. He does not send them upon difficult errands at first; he reserves for their riper years and stronger days the sterner tasks and more heroic deeds of daring. As we see his career in the light of the four evangelists, it is distinguished for his prudence, and in that respect "never man spake like this man."

He who on earth became obedient unto death has now gone *into the glory*, but he is still over the house of God, conducting its affairs. *He deals prudently still.* Our fears lead us to judge that the affairs of Christ's kingdom are going amiss, but we may rest assured that all is well, for the Lord hath put all things under the feet of Jesus, and made him to be head over all things to his church. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in the hand of Jesus still. *We* err, but *he* does not. Nay, the very points wherein we err are overruled by him for the display of his unerring wisdom and consummate skill.

The storms and tempests which surround the church serve only to illustrate the wisdom and power of our great Pilot; he has ultimate designs which are not apparent upon the surface, and these he never fails to accomplish.

Brethren, all along through the history of the church the dealings of the Lord Jesus with his people have been very remarkable. The wisdom in them is often deep, and only discoverable by those who seek it out, and yet frequently it sparkles upon the surface like gold in certain lands across the sea. Note how the Lord has made his church learn truth by degrees, and purified her first of one error and then of another. The church has fallen first into one folly and then into another, but her Lord has borne with her and delivered her. Full often he has allowed her to work her folly out, so as to see its result, and by this process he has stamped out the error effectually, so that it will never gain power again. At the present time the gross folly of uniting with the State is being practically proved before the eyes of all men, and when it has come to its fulness it will end, never to be revived again. We wonder sometimes why he allows this or that error to exist, and we ask how it can be that the church should be so despoiled of her purity and weakened in her strength. We wonder that our Lord does not judge the evil and punish it at once, or that he does not raise up some strong voice to protest against it, and, sending his Holy Spirit therewith, destroy the evil at once. I trow he might, but there is prudence in the withholding of his power. The wise physician tolerates disease until it shall have reached the point at which he can grapple with it, so as to eradicate it from the system, so has the good Lord allowed some ills to fester in the midst of his church, that he may ultimately exterminate them. We wish to see great success following all forms of ministry, we would see our missionary societies prosperous to such a degree that a nation should be born in a day; but the Lord withholds success in a great measure, and herein he is dealing

prudently. He keeps us back from prosperity, till we have learned that it does not after all arise out of our plans, and schemes, and resources, and energies: he would strip us of pride; he would put us in such a condition that it would be safe to us to give us success, and would be glorious to himself also. Often has a church, like Israel of old, to suffer defeat till it finds out and destroys the Achan who troubles the camp. The church has been foiled and humbled till at last in sheer despair she has fallen upon her face in prayer, and lifted up her heart to the strong for strength, and then her strength has returned, and victory has waited on her banners. As rivers filter and purify in their running, so does the church in her course become pure through the manifold wisdom of her Lord.

Study the pages of ecclesiastical history, and you will see how Jesus Christ has dealt wisely in the raising up of fitting men for all times. I could not suppose a better man for Luther's age than Luther, yet Luther alone would have been very incomplete for the full service needed had it not been for Calvin, whose calm intellect was the complement of Luther's fiery soul. You shall not find a better age for Wickliffe to have been born in than the time in which he shone forth as the morning star of the Reformation. God fits the man for the place, and the place for the man; there is an hour for the voice, and a voice for the hour.

Our Lord has done all things well even unto this day, but now, perhaps, we are getting a little tired; it is near two thousand years since he died, and there has been a long talk about its being the end of the six thousand years since creation's day, and we murmur to each other that the great Sabbath must surely be very near. I am not much in love with this chronological theory, for I think we cannot be very certain that we have not long ago passed beyond the seventh thousand years. It is very questionable to me whether we do not altogether misunderstand the chronology of the Old Testament; certainly nothing is more perplexing than the ancient

Hebrew numbering. Still, so the many will have it, and possibly so it is. A portion of the church not only expects the Lord's second advent, but gets into a state of feverishness about the matter. Surely, say they, his delays have been very great: why are his chariots so long in coming? Ah, brethren, the Master knows best. It may please him to finish up the present dispensation to-day; if so, he will doubtless deal prudently in so doing: but it may be that myriads of years are yet to elapse before his appearing, and if so there will be wisdom in the delay. Let us leave the matter alone, for while the general fact that he will come is clearly revealed in order to quicken our diligence, the details are veiled in mystery, since they would only gratify our curiosity. If I knew that our Lord would come this evening, I should preach just as I mean to preach; and if I knew he would come during this sermon, I would go on preaching until he did. Christian people ought not to be standing with their mouths open, gazing up into heaven and wondering what is going to happen; but they should abide with loins girt and lamps burning, ready for his appearing, whenever it may be. Go straight ahead upon the business your Lord has appointed you, and you need be under no apprehension of being taken by surprise. On one occasion I called to see one of our friends, and I found her whitening the front steps. When she saw me she jumped up and blushingly said, "Oh dear, sir, I am sorry you caught me like this; I wish I had known you were coming." "My dear sister," I said, "I hope that is how the Lord will find me at his coming—doing my duty." I should like to be found whitening the steps when the Lord comes, if that were my duty. Steady perseverance in appointed service is far better than prophetical speculation, especially if such speculation leads us to self-conceit and idleness. We may rest assured that the future is safe, for Jesus will deal wisely and come at the right time; therefore we may leave all matters in his hands. If the times are dark, it is right they should be; if the times are bright, it is right they

should be; I at least cannot change the times, and therefore my duty is to do the work God has given me to do, whether the times be dark or bright. For all practical purposes it is enough for us that infinite wisdom is at the helm of affairs; "my servant shall deal prudently."

Another translation of the passage is "my servant shall have prosperous success." Let us append that meaning to the other. *Prosperity will grow out of our Lord's prudent dealings.* The pleasure of the Lord prospers in the hands of Jesus. The gospel will prosper in the thing whereto God has sent it. The decrees of God will be accomplished; his eternal purposes will be fulfilled. We may desire this or that, and our wish may or may not be granted, but whatsoever the Lord has appointed in his infinite wisdom to be done will come to pass to the last jot and tittle. The blood of Jesus Christ will not miss of its foreseen result in reference to any individual under heaven, and no end that was designed in the eternal plan of redemption shall be left unaccomplished. All along the line the Captain of our salvation will be victorious, and in every point and detail of the entire business the will of the Lord shall be done, and all heaven and earth shall be filled with praise as they see that it is so.

In consequence of this the text tells us the Lord shall be exalted and extolled. How well he deserves to be exalted and extolled for his matchless prudence! Too highly he cannot be esteemed. At the present time you will say the name of Christ is not honoured; but wait awhile, and he shall be very high. His name is even now more honoured than in former days, when it was the jest of the nations. The prudent plans which the Lord has adopted are surely working out the growth of his kingdom, and will certainly result in bringing to the front his name, and person, and teaching. Perhaps you think that certain doctrines are hindrances to the success of the gospel: you know not what you say. In the end it shall be seen that every part of his teachings, and procedure, and every act of his life, and all his govern-

ment in providence were so wisely ordered, that as a whole they secured in the best and speediest manner the exalting and extolling of his holy name. The star of Jesus rises higher every hour; the twilight of Calvary brightens towards millennial day. He was despised and rejected of men, but now tens of thousands adore him; and, according to the omnipotent promise of the Father, to him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord. The Spirit of God is at work glorifying Jesus, and providence is bending all its forces to the same end. In heaven Jesus is exalted and extolled; in his church he is very high; and even in the world itself his name is a word of power already, and destined to be supreme in ages to come. Thus much, then, upon the character of Messiah's dealings.

II. Now let us view THE STUMBLING BLOCK IN THE WAY OF OUR LORD. It is his cross, which to Jew and Greek is ever a hindrance. As if the prophet saw him in vision, he cries out, "As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." When he was here, his personal position and condition and appearance were very much against the spread of his kingdom. He was the son of a carpenter, he wore the smock-frock of a peasant, he associated with publicans and sinners. Is he the Son of David? We looked for a great prince; we hoped for another Solomon. Is this he? Therefore the Jews rejected the meek and lowly prince of the house of David, and, alas, they persist in their rejection of his claims.

To-day he has risen from the grave and gone into his glory, but the offence of the cross has not ceased, for upon his gospel there remains the image of his marred visage, and therefore men despise it. The preaching of the cross is foolishness to many. The main doctrine of the gospel concerns Jesus crucified,—Jesus, the Son of God, put to an ignominious death, because for our sakes he was numbered with the transgressors, and bore the sin of many. Men will tell you they could believe

Christianity if it were not for the atonement; that is to say, if Jesus will come down from the cross, modern scoffers will believe in him, just as the ancient ones tauntingly promised to do; but of the gospel we may say that atoning blood is the pledge thereof, and if you leave out the substitutionary work of Christ from it, there is no gospel left. It is a body without a soul. This, then, seems to be the impediment to the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom:—he himself with his marred visage, and his gospel with a visage equally uncomely in the eyes of carnal men.

The practical part of the gospel is equally a stumbling-block to ungodly men, for when men inquire what they must do to be saved, they are told that they must receive the gospel as little children, that they must repent of sin, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Very humbling precepts for human self-sufficiency! And after they are saved, if they inquire what they should do, the precepts are not those which commend themselves to proud, hectoring human nature,—for they are such as these—"Be kindly affectioned one to another," "forgiving one another and forbearing one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." To the world which loves conquerors, and blasts of trumpets, and chaplets of laurel, this kind of teaching has a marred visage, and an uncomely form.

Then, what seems even more humbling, the Lord Jesus Christ in his prudent dealing not only brings before us a gospel offensive, because of the doctrine of atonement, and offensive in its practical precepts, but he sends this gospel among us by men who are neither great nor noble, nor even among the wise of this world. The proud say, "We would submit ourselves to men of master-minds, but we cannot endure these foolish ones. Send us philosophers and orators combined, let men overcome us by cogent arguments, let them master us by words whose splendour shall dazzle our intellects." Instead of which the Lord sends a man who talks humbly, plainly, and perhaps even coarsely. Very simple is what he

says: "Believe and live; Christ in your stead suffered for you, trust him:" he says this and little more. Is not this the fool's gospel? Is it not worthy to be called the foolishness of preaching? Men do not like this, it is an offence to their dignity. They would hear Cæsar if he would officiate in his purple, but they cannot endure Peter preaching in his fisherman's coat. They will hear a pope in his sumptuous array, or a cardinal in his red hat, and they would not object to listen to a well-trained dialectician of the schools, or an orator from the forum; but they are indignant at the man who disdains the excellency of speech, and styles the wisdom of this world folly. How can the gospel spread by such means? How, indeed, unless the Lord be with it, using human weakness to display the power of his grace?

Worse still, if worse can be, the people who become converted and follow the Saviour are generally of the poorer sort, and lightly esteemed. "Have any of the rulers believed?" is still the question. With what scorn do your literary men speak of professed Christians! Have you ever seen the sneer upon the face of your "advanced thought" gentleman, and of the far-gone school of infidels, when they speak of the old women and the semi-idiots who listen to the pious platitudes of evangelical doctrines? They know how to despise us if they know nothing else! But is such scorn worthy of men? It is only another version of the old sneer of the Pharisees when they said, "Hearest thou what these say?" and pointed to the boys and the rabble, who shouted, "Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Contempt has always followed at the heels of Jesus, and it always will till the day of his glory. If the great ones of the earth despise the Lord Jesus, on their own heads be their blood; to him it is a glory rather than a shame that "the poor have the gospel preached to them." He is the people's Christ of whom it was written of old,—"I have exalted one chosen out of the people." He rejoices to be called a leader and commander of the people, and he is glad that

"the common people hear him gladly." But here stands the head and front of the difficulty,—the cross, which is the soul of Christianity, is also its stumbling block.

If any here are offended with Christ because of his cross, I beg them to dismiss the prejudice. Should it lead any man to doubt the Saviour or withhold his heart from him because he comes with a visage marred with sorrow? If he came to teach us to be unhappy and to prescribe to us rules for increasing misery, we might be excused if we shunned his teaching; but if he comes bearing the grief himself that we may not bear it, and if those lines of agony were wrought in his countenance because he carried our griefs and our sorrows, they ought to be to us the most attractive of all beauties. I reckon that the scar across the warrior's face, which he gained in defending his country, is no disfigurement to him; it is a beauty spot. If my brother had in saving my life lost an arm or received a hideous wound, he would be all the more beautiful in my esteem; certainly I could not shun him on that account. The wounds of Jesus are precious jewels which should charm our eyes, eloquent mouths which should win our hearts. Be attracted by him, all of you! Hide not your faces from him! Look on him and live and love. That crown of thorns has far more true glory about it than any crown of gold; those hands pierced and nailed it should be your delight to kiss; before that once sorrowing person you should bow with joyful alacrity. Jesus, thou marred One, thy cross, instead of being a stumbling block to us is the glory of our faith.

That the gospel is spoken very plainly and that God blesses very simple people ought not to offend anybody. Ought it not rather to make us hopeful for the conversion of men because God may so largely bless commonplace instruments. Ought the conversion of the poor and the illiterate to be any offence to us? It shows a want of humanity; it looks as if pride had dried up the milk of human kindness in us, if we can grudge to those who

have so little of this present world the priceless boons of another.

III. The certainty of the removal of this stumbling block and the spread of Christ's kingdom. As his face was marred, so surely "shall he sprinkle many nations;" by which we understand, first, that the doctrines of the gospel are to fall in a copious shower over all lands. Jesus shall by his speech which drops as the dew and distils as the rain, sprinkle not the Jews only, but the Gentile nations everywhere. Thy brethren abhorred thee, O Immanuel! they despised thee, O Man of Nazareth! but all lands shall hear of thee, and feel thee coming down like showers upon the mown grass. The dusky tribes afar off, and the dwellers in the land of the setting sun shall hear thy doctrine, and shall drink it in as the fleece of wool sucks up dew. Thou shalt sprinkle many nations with thy gracious word.

This sprinkling we must interpret according to the Mosaic ceremonies, and you know there was a sprinkling with blood, to set forth pardon of sin, and a sprinkling with water to set forth purification from the power of sin. Jesus Christ with

> "The water and the blood
> From his riven side which flowed,"

has sprinkled not only many men but many nations, and the day will come when all nations shall feel the blessed drops which are scattered from his hands, and know them to be "of sin the double cure," cleansing transgressors both from its guilt and power.

Dr. Kitto explains the passage by an Oriental custom. He says that kings when they invited their subjects to great festivals would employ persons to sprinkle with perfume all who arrived, as they passed the palace gate. I scarcely think that that is the meaning of the text, but at any rate it supplies an illustration of it. Jesus invites men of all nations to come to the gospel feast, and as they enter he casts upon them the sweet perfumes

of his love and grace, so that they are fragrant before the Lord. There were no perfumes for thee, O Jesus, upon Calvary! Vinegar and gall were all they could afford thee; but now, since thou hast gone to heaven thou dost provide perfumes for multitudes of the sons of men, and nations north and south and east and west are refreshed with the delicious showers of fragrance which through the gospel fall upon them.

The text, then, claims for Jesus Christ that the influence of his grace and the power of his work shall be extended over many nations, and shall have power not over the common people only, but over their leaders and rulers. "The kings shall shut their mouths at him;" they shall have no word to say against him; they shall be so subdued by the majesty of his power that they shall silently pay him reverence, and prostrate themselves before his throne. Kings, mark you. I am always glad to hear of noblemen being converted, though I am by no means inclined to flatter the great, or to think more of one man's soul than of another's. I am glad, however, to hear of the salvation of peers and princes, for it indicates the wide spread of the gospel when all classes are affected by it, and when those who usually stand aloof yield themselves to its power. "Kings shall shut their mouths at him." This promise has not been fulfilled yet. There are those who think that the Biblical prophecies are pretty nearly accomplished, and that we are passing into a new dispensation. Well, I dare not dogmatise, but I dare question most of the talk I hear nowadays about the future. Scores of prophecies are not yet fulfilled. Kings have not shut their mouths at him yet: they have mostly opened their mouths wide against him, and reviled and blasphemed him and persecuted his saints. There must be brighter days to come for this poor world yet, when even princes shall humbly obey our Lord. The more I study the Bible, the more sure I am of two things which I cannot reconcile; first, that Christ will come at such an hour as men look not for him, and may come now; and

secondly, that the gospel is to be preached in all nations, and that "all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord." I do not know which of the two things I am surest of; neither do I know how to reconcile them; but they are both in the Word, and in due time they will be reconciled by history itself. Assuredly the day will come when the mightiest prince shall count it his highest honour to have his name enrolled as a member of the church of Christ. "Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him." The little handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains is yet to increase till the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon. "They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for all shall know him from the least to the greatest."

We look for this, and come it will. O thorn-crowned King of Calvary, kings shall be thy courtiers yet!

IV. Let us consider THE MANNER OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT. How will it come to pass? Will there be a new machinery? Will the world be converted, and the kings be made to shut their mouths by some new mode of operation? I do not think so. Will the saints take the sword one day? Will it be accomplished by that wonderful implement of civilisation, a gun-boat? Shall we convert the Hottentots by gunpowder? We have had a little trial of these carnal weapons, and some admire the success, but they may live to lament it. The Prince of Peace bids us put the sword into its scabbard; his weapons, like his kingdom, are not carnal. No, the way which has been from the beginning of the dispensation will last to its close. I believe that this battle is to be fought out on the line upon which it began. It pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. To conceive that our Lord will end the present mode of warfare, as though it were admitted that evil could not be conquered by the use of instrumentality, is to my mind to do him great dishonour. To me it is plain that, as he has chosen to

magnify his power by using feeble instruments, he will continue to do so till the victory is won. He has never yet relinquished his work so as to give the enemy an opportunity of claiming a victory. To change weapons is to lay one's self open to the charge of being unable to conquer with those first used; but it is not so with our Lord. The very same grain of mustard which is now so small is yet to become a tree with far-spreading branches, the leaven is yet to leaven the whole lump. The last harvest will be the result of sowing by men and not by some miraculous agency. The dividing of the people at last will be made from the contents of one and the same gospel drag-net, which we are bound to use till the heavens be no more.

According to this passage, these kings and nations are first of all to hear. "Faith coming by hearing." They are to hear something new. Well, brethren, if they are to hear, we must preach and teach, so that our clear line of duty is to go on spreading the gospel. Jesus Christ would have his servants preach and teach the gospel. Are you doing it? Go on doing it, brother, in the power of the Holy Ghost, whatever comes. Have you not done it? Begin to do so now, as one of Christ's servants, and pray for divine help. Do you say you cannot do it? You can. You are hiding your talent in a napkin; take it out, thou unfaithful servant, lest thy Lord come and judge thee! But you cannot teach many? Who said you could? Teach one. Oh, but you cannot preach? Who said preach? Teach; teach somehow. Cause the people to know the story of the cross. But you cannot teach kings, you say. Why need you? Teach servants and children; only do spread the gospel. The world is to be won to Christ, if it be ever won at all, by hearing the glad tidings of a dying Saviour's love, and how can they hear without a preacher, and how can they preach except they be sent? Christ sends you, for he says, "Let him that heareth say 'Come.'" In the power of that commission say at once,

" Now will I tell to sinners round
What a dear Saviour I have found,
Point them to his redeeming blood
And say, Behold the way to God."

These people appear not only to have heard, but to have *seen*. " That which had not been told them shall they see." This seeing is not with their bodily eyes but by the perceptions of their minds. Faith comes by the soul perceiving what the gospel means. We cannot believe in that which we do not perceive. Therefore we must go on telling people the gospel till they see what the gospel is. Many men will never know the gospel till they have been told it a thousand times, and you must keep on telling it to them till you get to that thousandth time. " What do you mean by that ? " say you. I mean this, that it must be line upon line and precept upon precept, almost to the exhaustion of patience, a mother's prayers, a teacher's anxieties, providences, sicknesses, twitches of conscience, ministries of all sorts, and many pleadings, and it is only at the last stroke that the word will be achieved, though all the other efforts will have contributed towards it. Go on, dear brother, go on, and teach Jesus Christ till the people see him. That sight will come upon a sudden. How many times have I heard the young convert say, " I knew all about this before, sir ; I have heard it many times, but I could not see it ; now I do see it." Oh, how it makes a man shut his mouth at Christ in humble silence, when he perceives at last that his marred visage and suffering form were tokens of divine love, and that by such sorrows sin is purged away. Would to God you all saw him now.

After they had seen, it appears from the text that they *considered*. " That which they had not heard shall they consider." This is how men are saved : they hear the gospel, they catch the meaning of it, and then they consider it. Let us pray, dear friends, that God would set unconverted people considering. If we can but get them to think, we have great hopes of them.

If any of you here have never yielded to Jesus Christ, I would ask you to hear or read about him; spend this afternoon in carefully reading one of the gospels; turn to Matthew, or Mark, or Luke, or John, and read the story of his passion, and ask God to let you see what it all means; and when you do see it, turn it all over in your minds. Think of it. Think how wonderful it is that God should become man to suffer in your stead. See if it be reasonable to disbelieve it or right to refuse to love the Saviour. There are a thousand reasons why you should rush into his arms and say, "Incarnate Deity, how can I resist thee? Bleeding Omnipotence, how dare I doubt thee? Immortal love, crucified for my sins, I yield myself to thee! I would be thy servant for ever."

It is clear that those people, when they had seen and considered silently, accepted the Lord as their Lord, for they shut their mouths at him; they ceased from all opposition; they quietly resigned their wills, and paid allegiance to the great King of kings. Brothers and sisters, we want to see this done for Christ now by hundreds here. There is a great religious stir just now, and we desire that this church, and all the churches abroad, should use the favourable breeze. You know how in harvest time the farmer gets all the men he can to work, and they toil on through long hours. I have seen them working briskly beneath the bright moonlight to get in the wheat. This is our harvest time, and we must get our sheaves in. The Lord has much corn, and it needs to be garnered; I pray you make long hours and work hard for Jesus, and let the subject expounded this morning inspirit you therein. The success of the gospel is in no jeopardy whatever. Jesus must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. If the devil can persuade you that Christ is going to give up the war, or is going to fight it out on another line, and dispense with your efforts, you will soon grow idle. You will find an excuse for laziness in some supposed conversion of the world by miracle, or some other won-

derful affair. You will say the Lord is coming, and the war will all be over at once, and there is no need of your fighting it out now. Do not believe it. Our Commander is able to fight it through on this line; in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, by the power of the Eternal Spirit, we are bound to keep right on till this world yields before God. You remember the American general who, when the nation was eager for speedy victory, said he did not know when that would come, but that he would keep on pegging away. That is what we are bound to do; to keep on "pegging away." No gunner may leave his gun, no subaltern may disperse his band, no officer may suggest a retreat. Brethren, Popery must fall, Mahommedanism must come down, and all the idol gods must be broken, and cast to the moles and to the bats. It looks a task too gigantic, but the bare arm of God—only think of that—his sleeve rolled up, omnipotence itself made bare,—what cannot it accomplish? Stand back, devils! when God's bare arm comes into the fight, you will all run like dogs, for you know your Master. Stand back, heresies and schisms, evils and delusions; you will all disappear, for the Christ of God is mightier than you. Oh, believe it. Do not be downhearted and dispirited, do not run to new schemes and fancies and interpretations of prophecy. Go and preach Jesus Christ unto all the nations. Go and spread abroad the Saviour's blessed name, for he is the world's only hope. The cross is the banner of our victory. God help us to look to it ourselves, and then to hold it up before the eyes of others, till our Lord shall come upon his throne. Amen.

THERE GO THE SHIPS.

"There go the ships."—PSALM civ. 26.

I WAS walking the other day by the side of the sea, looking out upon the English Channel. It so happened that there was a bad wind for the vessels going down the Channel, and they were lying in great numbers between the shore and the Goodwins. I should think I counted more than a hundred, all waiting for a change of wind. On a sudden the wind shifted to a more favourable quarter, and it was interesting to see with what rapidity all sails were spread, and the vessels began to disappear like birds on the wing. It was a sight such as one might not often see, but worth travelling a hundred miles to gaze upon, to see them all sail like a gallant squadron, and disappear southward on their voyages. "There go the ships," was the exclamation that naturally rose to one's lips. The psalmist thought it worth his while to pen the fact which he too had noticed, though it is very questionable whether David had ever seen anything like the number of vessels which pass our coasts, certainly he had seen none to be compared with them for tonnage.

The first lesson which may be learned from the ships and the sea is this—*every part of the earth is made with some design.* The land, of course, yields "grass for the cattle and herb for the service of man"; but what about the broad acres of the sea? We cannot sow them, nor turn them into pasturage. The reaper fills not his arm from the briny furrows, they give neither seed for the sower nor bread for the eater, neither do herds of cattle cover them as they do the thousand hills of earth. Re-

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morselessly swallowing up all that is cast upon it, the thankless ocean makes no return of fruit or flower. Is not the larger part of the world given up to waste? "No," says David, and so say we—"There go the ships." The sea benefits man by occasioning navigation, and yielding besides an enormous harvest of fishes of many kinds. Besides which, as the blood is needful for the body, so is it necessary for this world that there should be upon its surface a vast mass of water in perpetual motion. That measureless gathering together of the waters is an amazing instance of divine wisdom in its existence, its perpetual ebb and flow, and even in its form and quantity. In the ocean there is not a drop of water too much nor a drop too little. There is not a single mile of sea more than there ought to be, nor less than there should be. An exact balance and proportion is maintained, and we little know how the blooming of the tiny flower or the flourishing of the majestic cedar would be affected were the balance disturbed. Between the tiny drop of dew upon each blade of grass and the boundless main there is a relation and proportion such as only an infinite mind could have arranged. Remember also that the ocean's freshness tends to promote life and health among the sons of men. It is good that there is sea, or the land might devour its inhabitants by sickness. God has made nothing in vain. Ignorance gazes on the stormy deep and judges it to be a vast disorder, the mother of confusion and the nurse of storms; but better knowledge teaches us, what revelation had before proclaimed, namely, that in wisdom has the Lord made all things.

But does not the ocean grievously separate lovers and friends? Many a wife thinks of her husband on the far-off Pacific; many a mother casts an anxious thought towards her sailor boy; and both are half inclined to think it a mistake to place so vast a portion of the globe as a cruel dividing gulf between loving hearts. Others evidently thought so in years gone by, for among the figurative excellencies of the new earth we are told that

there shall be no more sea. But what a mistake it is to think that the sea is a divider: it is the great uniter of the races of men, for "there go the ships." It is the highway of nations, by which they reach each other far more readily than they could have done had no sea existed, and arid deserts or towering mountains had intervened. This is one instance in which we do not understand God's designs, for we judge them upon the surface. As the sea apparently divides, but really unites, nations, so often in providence things look one way, but go another. We say, "All these things are against me," when all things are working together for our good. We judge that to be a curse which, in the deep intent of God, is a rich blessing; and we write that down among the ills of life which, in God's esteem, is reckoned to be amongst its choicest mercies. Judge not according to the sight of the eyes, or the changeful feelings of the heart, but unstaggeringly believe in the infallible goodness of our great Father in heaven. As the child mistakes God's design in the sea, so will you also mistake his designs in providence, if you set up yourself as the measurer of the infinite.

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace.
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face."

Our subject, however, shall not be the uses of the sea, but this one simple matter—"There go the ships."

I. And, first, WE SEE THAT THE SHIPS GO. "There go the ships." *The ships are made to go.* The ship is not made to lie for ever upon the stocks, or to be shut up in the docks. It is generally looked upon as an old hulk of little service when it has to lie up in ordinary, and rot in the river. But a ship is made to go, and, as you see that it goes, remember that you also were made to go. Activity in Christian work is the result and design of grace in the soul. How I wish we could launch some of you. You are, we trust, converted, but you as

yet serve but slender uses, very quiet, sluggish, and motionless you lie on the stocks by the month together, and we have nearly as much trouble to launch you as Brunel had with the "Great Eastern." I have tried hard to knock away your blocks, and remove your dog-shores, and grease your ways, but you need hydraulic rams to stir you. When will you feel that you must go, and learn to "walk the water as a thing of life"? Oh for a grand launch. Hundreds are lying high and dry, and to them I would give the motto, "launch out into the deep." The ships go, when will you go too?

The ships in going at last disappear from view. The vessel flies before the wind, and very speedily it is gone: and such is our destiny ere long. Our life is gone as the swift ships. We think ourselves stationary, but we are always moving on. As we sit in these pews so quietly the angel of time is bearing us between his wings at a speed more rapid than we guess. Every single tick of the clock is but a vibration of his mighty wings, and he bears us on, and on, and on, and never stays to rest either by day or night. Swift as the arrow from the bow we are always speeding towards the target. How short time is! How very short our life is! Let each one say, "How short *my* life is!" No man knows how near he is to his grave. Perhaps if he could see it, it is just before him: I almost wish he could see it, for a yawning grave might make some men start to reason and to thought. That yawning grave is there, though they perceive it not.

> "A point of time, a moment's space,
> May land me in yon heavenly place,
> Or shut me up in hell."

"There go the ships," and there go you also; you are never in one stay. You are always flying, swift as the eagle, or, to come back to the text, as the swift ship, yet "all men think all men mortal but themselves." The oldest man here probably thinks he will outlive some of the younger ones. The man who is soonest to

die may be the very man who has the least thought of death of us all; and he that is nearest to his departure is, perhaps, the man who least thinks of it. Just as in the ship all were awake, and every man praying to his God except Jonah, for whom the storm was raging, so does it often happen that in a congregation every man may be aroused and made to think of his latter end except the one man, the marked man, who never will see to-morrow's sun. As you see the ships, think of your mortality.

The ships as they go are going upon business. Some few ships go hither and thither upon pleasure, but for the most part the ships have something serious to do. They have a charter, and they are bound for a certain port, and this teaches us how we should go on the voyage of life with a fixed, earnest, weighty purpose. May I ask each one of you, Have you something to do, and is it worth doing? You are sailing, but are you sailing like a mere pleasure yacht, whose port is everywhere, which scuds and flies before every fitful wind, and is a mere butterfly with no serious work before it? You may be as heavily laden and dingy as a collier, there may be nothing of beauty or swiftness about you, but after all, the main thing is the practical result of your voyage. Dear friend, what are you doing? What have you been doing? And what do you contemplate doing? I should like every young man here just to look at himself. Here you are, young man; you certainly were not sent into this world merely to wear a coat, and to stand so many feet in your stockings; you must have been sent here with some intention. A noble creature like man—and man is a noble creature as compared with the animal creation—is surely made for something. What were *you* made for? Not merely to enjoy yourself. That cannot be. You certainly are not "a butterfly born in a bower," neither were you made to be creation's blot and blank. Neither can you have been created to do mischief. It were an evil thing for you to be a mere serpent in the world, to creep in the grass and wound the traveller.

No, you must be made for something. What is that something? Are you answering your end? For God's glory we were made. Nothing short of this is worthy of immortal beings. Have we sought that glory? Are we seeking it now? If not, I commend to your consideration this thought, that as the ships go on their business so ought men to live with a fixed and worthy purpose. I would say this, not only to young men, but with greater earnestness still to men who may have wasted forty years. Oh, how could I dare to stand before this congregation to-night and have to say, "Friends, I have had no object; I have lived in this world for myself alone, I have had no grand purpose before me"? I should be utterly ashamed if that were the fact. And if any man is obliged to feel that his purpose was such that he dares not avow it, or that he has only existed to make so much money, or gain a position in life, or to enjoy himself, but he has never purposed to serve his God, I would say to him, Wake up, wake up, I pray you, to a noble purpose, worthy of a man. May God, the ever-blessed spirit, set this before you in the light of eternity, and in the light of Jesus' dying love, and may you be aroused to solemn, earnest purpose and pursuit. "There go the ships," but not idly: they go upon business.

These ships, however, whatever their errand be, *sail upon a changeful sea.* To-day the sea is smooth like glass: the ship, however, makes very small headway. To-morrow there is a breeze, which fills out the sail, and the ship goes merrily before it. Perhaps, before night comes on, the breeze increases to a gale, and then rushes from a gale into a hurricane. Let the mariner see to it when the storm-winds are out, for the ship need be staunch to meet the tempest. Mark how in the tempestuous hour the sea mingles with the clouds, and the clouds with the sea. See how the ship mounts up to heaven on the crest of the wave, and then dives into the abyss in the furrow between the enormous billows, until the mariners reel to and fro and stagger like drunken men. Anon they have weathered the storm, and per-

haps to-morrow it will be calm again. "There go the ships" on an element which is a proverb for fickleness, for we say, "false as the smooth, deceitful sea." "*They* go," say you, "upon the sea, but I dwell upon the solid earth." Ah, good sir, there is not much to choose. There is nothing stable beneath yon waxing and waning moon. We say "*terra firma*," but where, where is *terra firma?* What man is he who has found out the rock immovable? Certainly not he who looks to this world for it. He has it not who thinks he has, for many plunge from riches into poverty, from honour to disgrace, from power to servitude. Who says "My mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved"? He speaks as the foolish speak. It is a voyage, sir, and even with Christ on board it is a voyage in which storms will occur, a voyage in which you may have to say, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Expect changes, then. Do not hold anything on earth too firmly. Trust in God and be on the watch, for who knoweth what may be on the morrow? "There go the ships."

II. But now having spoken upon that, our second point is, HOW GO THE SHIPS? What makes them go? For there are lessons here for Christian men. We leave our steam ships out of the question, as they were not known in David's day, and therefore not intended. But how go the ships? Well, *they must go according to the wind.* They cannot make headway without favouring gales. And if our port be heaven, there is no getting there except by the blessed Spirit's blowing upon us. He bloweth where he listeth, and we need that he should breathe upon us. We never steer out of the port of destruction upon our venturesome voyage till the heavenly wind drives us out to sea; and when we are out upon the ocean of spiritual life we make no progress unless we have his favouring breath. We are dependent upon the Spirit of God, even more than the mariners upon the breeze. Let us know all this, and therefore cry,

> "Celestial breeze, no longer stay,
> But fill my sails and speed my way."

It is not possible to insist too much on the humbling truth, "Without me ye can do nothing": it helps to check self-confidence, and it exalts the Holy Ghost. Unless we honour him he will not honour us, and therefore let us cheerfully acknowledge our absolute dependence upon him.

But still the mariner does not go by the wind without exertion on his own part, for the sails must be spread and managed so that the wind may be utilised. One man will go many knots, while another with the same breeze goes but few, for there is a good deal of tacking about wanted sometimes, to use the little wind, or the cross wind, which may prevail. Sometimes all the sails must be spread, and at other times only a part. Management is required. If some were spread they might take the wind out of others, and so the ship might lose instead of gaining. There is a deal of work on board a ship. I believe that some people have a notion that the ship goes of itself, and that the sailors have nothing to do but sit down, and enjoy themselves; but if you have ever been to sea as an able-bodied seaman, you have discovered that for an easy life you must not be one of a ship's crew. And so, mark you, we are dependent upon the Spirit of God, but he puts us into motion and action; and if Christian men sit down and say, "Oh, the Spirit of God will do the work," you will find the Spirit of God will do nothing of the sort. The only operation which he will be likely to perform will be to convince you that you are a sluggard, and that you will come to poverty. The Spirit of God makes men earnest, fervent, living, and intense. He "works in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure." We have sails to manage to catch the favouring breeze, and we shall want all the strength we can obtain if we are to make good headway in the voyage of life. Some professors say "God will save his own people." I am afraid he will never save *them.* They expect there will come good times when a great number of the elect will be gathered in, but they fold their arms and do nothing at all to

promote the spread of the gospel. When they see others a little busy, they say, "Ah, mere excitement!" and so on, and they tell us God will have his own, to which I generally reply that I believe he will, but I do not believe he will have *them*, because if they were his own they would not talk in that fashion, for those who are God's own people have a zeal for God and a love for souls. Do you not remember what God said to David? "When thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees then shalt thou bestir thyself." Not "Then shalt thou sit still, and say God will do it." When David heard the angels coming over the tops of the trees to fight the Philistines, and when he heard their soft tread amongst the leaves, like the rustling of the wind, then he was to bestir himself: and so, when God's Spirit comes to work in the church, the Christian must bestir himself and not sit still. "There go the ships." They go with the wind, but they are the scene of great industry, or else the wind would whistle through the yards, and the ship would make no voyages. Thus, brethren, we see dependence and energy united; faith sweetly showing itself in good works.

"There go the ships." How do they go? Well, *they have to be guided and steered by the helm.* The helm is a little thing, but yet it rules the vessel. As the helm is turned so is the vessel guided. Look ye well to it, Christian men, that your motives and purposes are always right. Your love is the helm of the vessel; where your affection is your thoughts and actions tend. If you love the world you will drift with the world, but if the love of the Father be in you, then will your vessel go towards God and towards divine things. Oh, see to it that Christ has his hand on the tiller, and that he guides you towards the haven of perfect peace.

The ship being guided by the helm, *he who manages the helm seeks direction from charts and lights.* "There go the ships," but they do not go of themselves, without management and wisdom. Thought is exercised, and knowledge and experience. There is an eye on deck

which at night looks out for yonder revolving light, or the coloured ray of the light ship just ahead there, and the thoughtful brain says, "I must steer south-west of such a light," or "to the north of such a light, or I shall be upon the sands." Besides mere outlooks upon the sea, that anxious eye also busies itself with the chart, scans the stars, and takes observations of the moon. The captain's mind is exercised to learn exactly where the vessel is, and where she is going, lest the good ship unawares should come to mischief. And so, dear brethren, if we are to get to heaven, we must study well the Scriptures, we must look well to every warning and guiding light of the Spirit's kindling, and ask for direction from above; for as the ships go not at haphazard, so neither will any Christian find his way to heaven unless he watch and pray and look up daily, saying, "Guide me in a plain path, O God."

The voyage of a ship on the main ocean seems to me to be an admirable picture of the life of faith. The sailor does not see a road before him, or any land mark or sea mark, yet is sure of his course. He relies upon fixed lights in heaven, for far out he can see no beacon or light on the sea. His calculations, based on the laws of the heavenly bodies, are sure guides on a wild wilderness where no keel ever leaves a furrow to mark the way. The late Captain Basil Hall, one of the most scientific officers in the navy, tells the following interesting incident. He once sailed from San Blas, on the west coast of Mexico; and after a voyage of eight thousand miles, occupying eighty-nine days, he arrived off Rio de Janeiro, having in this interval passed through the Pacific Ocean, rounded Cape Horn, and crossed the South Atlantic, without making land or seeing a single sail except an American whaler. When within a week's sail of Rio, he set seriously about determining by lunar observations the position of his ship, and then steered his course by those common principles of navigation which may be safely employed for short distances between one known station and another. Having arrived

within what he considered from his computations fifteen or twenty miles of the coast, he hove to, at four o'clock in the morning, to await the break of day, and then bore up, proceeding cautiously, on account of a thick fog. As this cleared away, the crew had the satisfaction of seeing the great Sugar Loaf Rock, which stands on one side of the harbour's mouth, so nearly right ahead, that they had not to alter their course above a point, in order to hit the entrance of the port. This was the first land they had seen for nearly three months, after crossing so many seas, and being set backwards and forwards by innumerable currents and foul winds. The effect upon all on board was electric, and giving way to their admiration, the sailors greeted the commander with a hearty cheer. And what a cheer will we give when after many a year's sailing by faith we at last see the pearly gates right straight ahead, and enter into the fair havens without needing to shift a point. Glory be to the Captain of our salvation, it will be all well with us when the fog of this life's care shall lift, and we shall see in the light of heaven.

Once more, how go the ships? They not only go according to the wind, guided by the helm and the chart, but some ships will go better than others, *according to their build.* With the same amount of wind one vessel makes more way than another. Now it is a blessed thing when the grace of God gives a Christian a good build. There are some church members who are so queerly shaped that somehow they never seem to cut the water, and even the Holy Spirit does not make much of them. They will get into harbour at last, but they will need a world of tugging. The snail did get into the ark: I often wonder how he did it, he must have got up very early that morning. However, the snail got in as well as the greyhound, and so there are many Christian people who will get to heaven, but heaven alone knows how, for they are such a queer sort of people that they seem to make no progress in the divine life. I would sooner live in heaven with them

for ever than be fifteen minutes with them here below. God seems to shape some Christian minds in a more perfect model than others, so that, having simplicity of character, warmth of heart, zealous temperaments, and generous spirits, when the wind of the Spirit comes they cut through the foam.

Now, I suspect that some good people have by degrees become like the "Great Eastern" a short time since, namely, foul under water. They cannot go, because they are covered with barnacles. A ship is greatly impeded in its voyage if it carries a quantity of barnacles on her bottom. I know lots of Christian people—I could point them out to-night, but I will not—who are covered with barnacles. They cannot go, because of some secret inconsistency, or love of the things of this world rather than the love of God. They want laying up and cleaning a bit, so as to get some of the barnacles off. It is a rough process, but it is one to which some of God's vessels have to be exposed. What headway they would make towards heaven if that which hindereth were removed. Sometimes when a man is on a bed of sickness, he is losing his barnacles; and sometimes, when a man has been rich and wealthy, and he has lost all he had, it takes off the barnacles. When we have lost friends we love, and whom we have made idols of, we have been sorry to lose them, but it has cleaned off our barnacles; and when we have got out to sea there has been an ease about the going, and we have scarcely known how it was, but God knew that he had made us more fit for his service by the trials of life to which he exposed us.

That is how the ships go. There are many mysteries about them, and there are many in us. God makes us go by the gales of his Spirit. Oh, that we may be trim for going, buoyant, and swift to be moved, and so may we make a grand voyage to heaven with Christ Jesus at the helm.

III. Thirdly and briefly. When I saw these ships go I happened to be near a station of Lloyd's, and I noticed

that they ran up flags as the vessels went by, to which the vessels replied. I suppose they were *asking questions* —to know their names and what their cargo was, and where they were going, and so on. Now I am going to act as Lloyd's to-night, and put up the flags and ask you something about yourselves. The third point will then be—the ships go, LET US SIGNAL THEM.

And, first, *who is your owner?* "There go the ships," but who is your owner? You do not reply, but I think I can make a guess. There are some hypocrites about, who make fine pretensions, but they are not holy living people, they even dare to come to the Lord's table, and yet they drink of the cup of devils. They will sing pious hymns with us, and then sing lascivious ditties with their familiars. I would say to such a man,—you are a rotten vessel, you do not belong to King Jesus. Every timber is staunch in his vessels. They are not all what we should like them to be, and as I have said already they too often are covered with barnacles, but still they are all sincere. The Lord builds his vessels with sound timber, and unless we are sincere, true, and right, Christ is not our owner, but Satan is. The painted hypocrite is known through the disguise he wears.

There is another vessel over there, a fine vessel too. Look, she is newly painted, and looks spick and span. You can see nothing amiss with her. What white sails, and do you notice the many flags? Take the glass and read the vessel's name, and you will see in bold letters, "Self-righteousness." Ah, I know that the owner is not the Lord Jesus Christ, for all the ships that belong to him carry the red cross flag, and cannot endure the flaunting rag of self-righteousness. All God's people own that they must be saved by sovereign grace, and anything like righteousness of their own they pump overboard as so much leakage and bilge-water. I see another vessel over yonder, with her sails all spread, and every bit of her colours flying. There, there, what a blaze she makes! How proud she seems as she scuds over the water. That vessel is "The Pride," from the

port of Self-Conceit, Captain Ignorance. I do not know where she is oftenest to be seen, but sometimes she crosses this bit of water. I should not wonder if she is in sight here now, and you may be sure she does not belong to our Lord Jesus. Whether it is pride of money, or person, or rank, or talent, it cometh of evil, and Jesus Christ does not own it. You must get rid of all pride if you belong to him. God grant us to be humble in heart. I could mention some more vessels that I see here to-night, but I will not. I will rather beg each man to ask himself, "Can I put my hand on my heart and say, 'I am not my own, I am bought with a price'? Did Jesus buy me with his precious blood, and do I own that there is not a timber, spar, rope, or bolt in me but what belongs to him?" Blessed be his name, some of us can say there is not a hair of our head or a drop of our blood but what belongs to him. Thine are we, thou Son of David, and all that we have.

I hope there are vessels here which are owned by the Lord Jesus Christ. Let them never be ashamed to confess their Owner. A vessel on proper business is never ashamed to answer signals. If there should be a smuggler or pirate in the offing the crews would not be likely to answer signals, but those who are on honest business are ready to reply. And so, brethren, be ye ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear; never show in your actions that you are ashamed of Jesus, but ever let the broad flag be flying in whatever waters you are—"Christ is mine, and I am his. For him I live, his reproach would I bear, and his honour would I maintain."

Our next inquiry is, *what is your cargo?* "There go the ships," but what do they carry? You cannot tell from looking at them far out at sea, except that you can be pretty sure that some of them do not carry much. Look at that showy brig! You can tell by the look of her that she has not much on board; from the fact of her floating so high it is clear that her cargo is light. Big men, very important individuals, very high-floating

people are common, but there is nothing in them. If they had more on board they would sink deeper in the water. As we said this morning, the more grace a man has the lower he lies before God. Well, brethren, what cargo have you got? I am afraid some of you who lie down in the water are not kept down by any very precious cargo, but I fear you are in ballast. I have gone aboard some Christians; I thought there was a good deal in them, but I have not been able to find it. They have a deal of trouble, and they always tell you about it. There is a good old soul I call in to see sometimes: I begin to converse with her, and her conversation is always about rheumatism: nothing else: you cannot get beyond rheumatism: that good sister is in ballast. There is another friend of mine, a farmer, if you talk with him, it is always about the badness of the times: that brother is in ballast too. There are many tradesmen who, though they are Christians, cannot be made to talk of anything but the present dulness of business. I wish they could get that ballast out, and fill up with something better, for it is not worth carrying. You must have it sometimes, I suppose; but it is infinitely better to carry a load of praises, prayers, good wishes, holy doctrines, charitable actions, and generous encouragements.

Some ships, I think, carry a cargo of *powder*. You cannot go very near them without feeling you are in danger, they are so very apt to misjudge and take offence. I wish that such persons were made to carry a red flag, that we might give them a wide berth.

It is well to be loaded with good things. Young people, study the word of God, ask to be taught by experience, and, wherever you go, seek to carry the precious commodities which God has made dear to your own soul, that others may be enriched thereby. It is an interesting sight to see those immense ships loaded with passengers for the colonies. I cannot help praying as I look at them, "God grant that no harm may come to them, but may they safely reach their desired haven." When I look at some of our brethren whom God is blessing,

so that they have a cargo of blessed souls on board, consisting of hundreds who have been brought to Jesus by them, I would to God we had many more. Thank God, I have sometimes had my decks crowded with passengers who have from my ministry received the gospel. The Lord has brought them on board, and oh, I trust before I die he will give me thousands more who will have to thank God that they heard the gospel from these lips. May we be emigrant vessels bearing souls away into the glory-land where the days of their mourning shall be ended. Of course we can only be humble instruments, but still, what honour God puts upon his instruments when he makes use of them for this object. "There go the ships." Not ships of war are we, with guns to carry death, but missionary vessels carrying tidings of peace and glad news to the utmost ends of the earth.

Our last signal asks the question—*where go the ships?* Where go the ships? Oh, yes, they went merrily down the Channel the other day, but where are they now? In a year's time who will report all the good vessels, which just now passed by our coast? I am looking out upon all of you, anxious to know what port you are making for. Some of you are bound for the port of peace. Swiftly may the winds convey you over the waters, and safely may you voyage under the convoy of the Lord Jesus. I will try and keep pace with you. I hope that you will sail in company with others of my Master's vessels, but if you have to sail alone over a sea in which you cannot see another sail, may God, the blessed One, protect and guard you. Bound for the port of peace, with Christ on board, insured for glory, bound for life eternal, let us bless the name of the Lord.

But alas, alas, many ships which bid fair for the desired haven are lost on the rocks. Some soul-destroying sin causes their swift destruction. Others equally fair to look upon are lost on the sands. They seemed bound for heaven, but they were not the Lord's. The sands are very dangerous, but they are only a mass of little atoms, soft and yielding, yet as many ships are lost on the sands

as on the rocks. Even so there are ways and habits of evil which are deceptive—there is nothing very bad about them apparently; nothing heart-breaking, like rocks, but oh, the multitudes of souls that have been sucked in by sandy temptations. Dear brother, I hope you are not going that way. God grant you grace to avoid little sins, and I am sure you will keep off the rocks of great sin. In any case may we turn out to be the Lord's own, and so be kept to the end. Woe unto us if we should prove to be mere adventurers, and perish in our presumption.

Among the ships that go to sea there are some that *founder*. One does not know how, but they are never heard of more. They were sighted on such a day, but never more shall we hear any tidings of them. How is that? I have known some of the members of this church go down in mid-ocean. I never thought it could have happened, but they have gone. I can only imagine how it was. They seemed seaworthy vessels, but they were doubtless rotten through and through. Oh, brethren may God keep you from foundering, as some do by some mysterious sin, which seems as if it clasped the soul and dragged it down to the deeps of hell.

Some vessels have I known, too, that have become *derelict*—waifs and strays upon the sea—men that were the hope of churches, but who have abandoned themselves to reckless living. They used to worship with the people of God, and seemed to be very earnest and zealous, and now, perhaps, at this very moment they are passing through the gin palace door, or spending this evening in vices which we dare not mention. Oh, it is dreadful. Many start on their voyage, and look as if they were Christ's own vessels, and yet for some strange unreasonable reason they give all up, and they will be met with, in years to come, drifting about, rudderless, captainless, crewless, dangerous to others, and miserable to themselves. God save you from this, young man! And you, my friend, though you have been a member of this church for twenty years, God save you from

despairing, and sinning furiously; for there sometimes come over men strange moments of insanity in which they reverse the whole of their lives, lay violent hands upon an excellent character, and become castaways. The grace of God will save the truly regenerate from this: but, alas, how many high professors never were regenerate at all!

Where will some of the vessels I see before me go? It is a fine fleet I am looking upon. Brothers and sisters, I hope all of us will be found in that great harbour in heaven which can accommodate all his Majesty's fleet. Oh, it will be a great day when we all arrive. Will you give me a hail when you get into port? Will you know me? I shall look out for some of you. I cannot help believing that we shall know each other. We have been in rough waters together these twenty years, and we have had some glorious weather too, have we not? We have seen the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep: I hope we shall keep together till we reach that blessed haven, where our fellowship will be eternal. How we will glorify him who gets us there, even Jesus, the Lord High Admiral of the seas. Christ shall never hear the last of it if I get to heaven. *I will* sing, yea, I will sing praises unto his name. I remember preaching once, when half of my congregation quarrelled with me when I had done preaching, for I had said—

> "Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing
> While heaven's resounding mansions ring
> With shouts of sovereign grace."

As I came downstairs I met one who said, "You will not sing loudest, for I owe more to grace than you do;" and I found that all the Lord's people said the same. Well, we will have it out when we get to heaven: we will try this contention among the birds of Paradise, and see which of us can sing the most loudly to the praise of redeeming grace. Till then let us trust the Lord Jesus and obey his orders, for he is our Captain, and it is our duty to do his bidding.

But it would be a dreadful supposition—and yet, mayhap, it may be worse than a supposition—that some of you will have to cast anchor for ever in the Dead Sea, whose waves are fire, where every vessel is a prison, where every passenger feels a hell. What must it be to be in hell an hour! I wish some of you could think it over. What must it be to be shut up in despair for one single day! If you have the toothache a few minutes how wretched you are, and how anxious to get rid of it; but what must it be to be in hell even if it were for a time,—even if it were *but* for a time. Oh, if it came to an end, still would I say, by all the humanities that are in my soul, I charge you, brother, do not risk the wrath of God; go not down to the pit. Pull down that black flag, man: pull it down and cast off your old owner. Ask Christ to be your owner. Run up the red flag of the cross and give yourself to Jesus, for if you do not your voyage must lead to the gulf of black despair, where you will suffer for ever the result of your sin. God have mercy upon us, and may we never have to pass through the straits of judgment into the gulf of damnation. May it never be said, "There goes one of the ships that the Tabernacle pilot signalled; it is gone to destruction." May it rather be said, of all of us, all in full sail together, as we go towards heaven, "There go the ships:" not one of them is drifting to the gulf of destruction. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and all is well with you. Reject him, and all is ill with you. May he by his word enable you to make a right choice to-night, for his love's sake. Amen.

THE MAN OF ONE SUBJECT.

"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."—1 CORINTHIANS ii. 2.

PAUL was a very determined man, and whatever he undertook he carried out with all his heart. Once let him say "I determined," and you might be sure of a vigorous course of action. "This one thing I do" was always his motto. The unity of his soul and its mighty resoluteness were the main features of his character. He had once been a great opposer of Christ and his cross, and shown his opposition by furious persecutions; it was not so very much to be wondered at that when he became a disciple of this same Jesus, whom he had persecuted, he should become a very ardent one, and bring all his faculties to bear upon the preaching of Christ crucified. His conversion was so marked, so complete, so thorough, that you expect to see him as energetic for the truth as once he had been violent against it.

A man so whole-hearted as Paul, so thoroughly capable of concentrating all his forces as the apostle was, and so entirely won over to the faith of Jesus, was likely to enter into his cause with all his heart and soul and might, and determine to know nothing else but his crucified Lord. Yet do not think that the apostle was a man easily absorbed in one thought. He was, above the most of men, a reasoner, calm, judicious, candid, and prudent. He looked at things in their bearings and relations, and was not a stickler for minor matters. Perhaps even more than might perfectly be justified he made

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Delivered on Sunday morning, October 31, 1875, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

himself all things to all men that he might by all means win some, and therefore any determination which he came to was only arrived at after taking counsel with wisdom. He was not a zealot of that class which may be likened to a bull which shuts its eyes and runs straight forward, seeing nothing which may lie to the right or to the left; he looked all round him calmly, and quietly, and though he did in the end push forward in a direct line at his one object, yet it was with his eyes wide open, perfectly knowing what he was doing, and believing that he was doing the best and wisest thing for the cause which he desired to promote. If, for instance, to have opened his ministry at Corinth by proclaiming the unity of the Godhead, or by philosophically working out the possibilities of God's becoming incarnate,—if these had been the wisest plans for spreading the Redeemer's kingdom Paul would have adopted them; but he looked at them all, and having examined them with all care, he could not see that anything was to be got by indirect preaching, or by keeping back a part of the truth, and therefore he determined to go straight forward, and promote the gospel by proclaiming the gospel. Whether men would hear or whether they would forbear, he resolved to come to the point at once, and preach the cross in its naked simplicity. Instead of knowing a great many things which might have led up to the main subject, he would not know anything in Corinth, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Paul might have said "I had better beat about the bush, and educate the people up to a certain mark before I come to my main point; to lay bare my ultimate intent at the first might be to spread the net in the sight of the birds and frighten them away. I will be cautious and reticent and will take them with guile, enticing them on in pursuit of truth." But not so: looking at the matter all round as a prudent man should, he comes to this resolve, that he will know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and him crucified. I would to God that the "culture" we hear of in these days, and all this boasted "modern thought," would

come to the same conclusion. This most renowned and scholarly divine after reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting everything as few men could do, yet came to this as to the issue of it all,—"I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." May God grant that the critical skill of our cotemporaries and their laborious excogitations may land them on the same shore, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

I. Our first consideration this morning will be, WHAT WAS THIS SUBJECT TO WHICH PAUL DETERMINED TO SHUT HIMSELF UP WHILE PREACHING TO THE CHURCH AT CORINTH? That subject was one, though it may also be divided into two; it was *the person* and *the work* of our Lord Jesus Christ: laying special stress upon that part of his work which is always the most objected to, namely, his substitutionary sacrifice, his redeeming death. Paul preached Christ in all his positions, but he especially dwelt upon him as the crucified one.

The apostle first preached his great Master's *person*—Jesus Christ. There was no equivocation about Paul when he spoke of Jesus of Nazareth. He held him up as a real man, no phantom, but one who was crucified, dead and buried, and rose again from the dead in actual bodily existence. There was no hesitation about his Godhead either. Paul preached Jesus as the Son of the Highest, as the wisdom and the power of God, as one "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." You never doubted when you heard Paul but what he believed in the divinity and the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and worshipped and adored him as very God of very God. He preached his person with all clearness of language and warmth of love. The Christ of God was all in all to Paul.

The apostle spoke equally clearly upon the Redeemer's *work*, especially laying stress upon his death. "Horrible!" said the Jew. "How can you boast in a man who died a felon's death, and was cursed because he was hanged on a tree!" "Ah," said the Greek, "tell

us no more about your God that died! Babble no longer about resurrection. We never shall believe such unmitigated foolishness." But Paul did not, therefore, put these things into the background and say, "Gentlemen, I will begin with telling you of the life of Christ, and of the excellency of his example, and by this means I shall hope to tempt you onward to the conclusion that there was something divine in him, and then afterwards to the further conclusion that he made an atonement for sin." But no, he began with his blessed person and distinctly described him as he had been taught it by the Holy Spirit, and as to his crucifixion he put it in the front and made it the main point. He did not say "Well, we will leave the matter of his death for a time," or "We will consider it under the aspect of a martyrdom by which he completed his testimony," but he gloried in the crucified Redeemer, the dead and buried Christ, the sin-bearing Christ, the Christ made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." This was the subject to which he confined himself at Corinth: beyond this he would not stir an inch. Nay, he does not merely determine to keep his preaching to that point, but he resolves not even to *know* any other subject; he would keep his mind fast closed among them to any thought but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Very impolitic this must have seemed. Call in a council of worldly wise men, and they will condemn such a rash course; for in the first place such preaching would drive away all the Jews. Holding as the Jew did the Old Testament Scriptures, and receiving therefore a great deal of teaching about the Messiah, and holding very firmly to the unity of the Godhead, the Jews had gone a long way towards the light, and if Paul had kept back the objectionable points a little while, might he not have drawn them a little further and so by degrees have landed them at the cross? Wise men would have remarked upon the hopefulness of the Israelites, if handled with discretion, and their advice

would have been, "We do not say, renounce your sentiments, Paul, but disguise them for a little while. Do not say what is untrue, but at the same time be a little reticent about what is true, or else you will drive away these hopeful Jews." The apostle yielded to no such policy, he would not win either Jew or Gentile by keeping back the truth, for he knew that such converts are worthless. If the man who is near the kingdom will be driven right away from the gospel by hearing the unvarnished truth, that is no guide as to Paul's duty; he knows that the gospel must be a "savour of death unto death" to some as well as of "life unto life" unto others, and therefore whichever may occur he must deliver his own soul: consequences are not for him, but for the Lord. It is ours to speak the truth boldly, and in every case we shall be a sweet savour unto God; but to temporise in the hope of making converts is to do evil that good may come, and this is never to be thought of for an instant.

Another would say "But, Paul, if you do this you will arouse opposition. Do you not know that Christ crucified is a byword and a reproach to all thinking men? Why, at Corinth there are a number of philosophers, and I tell you it will create unbounded ridicule if you so much as open your mouth about the Crucified One and his resurrection. Do not you remember on Mars' Hill how they mocked you when you spoke upon that theme? Do not provoke their contempt. Argue with their Gnosticism, and show them that you too are a philosopher. Be all things to all men; be learned among the learned, and rhetorical among the orators. By these means you will make many friends, and by degrees your conciliatory conduct will bring them to accept the gospel." The apostle shakes his head, puts down his foot, and with firm voice utters his decision, "I have *determined*," says he, "I have already made up my mind, your counsels and advice are lost upon me; I have *determined* to know nothing among the Corinthians, however learned the Gentile portion of them

may be, or however fond of rhetoric, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." He stands to that.

It is further worthy of note that the apostle had resolved that his subject should so engross the attention of his hearers that he would not even speak it with excellency of speech or garnish it with man's wisdom. You have heard perhaps of the famous painter who drew the likeness of James I. He represented him sitting in a bower with all the flowers of the season blooming around him, and nobody ever took the smallest notice of the king's visage, for all eyes were charmed by the excellency of the flowers. Paul resolved that he would have no flowers at all, that the portrait which he sketched should be Christ crucified, the bare fact and doctrine of the cross without so much as a single flower from the poets or the philosophers. Some of us need not be very loud in our resolution to avoid fine speech, for we may have but slender gifts in that direction; but the apostle was a man of fine natural powers and of vast attainments, a man whom the Corinthian critics could not have despised, and yet he threw away all ornaments to let the unadorned beauty of the cross win its own way.

As he would not add flowers, so he would not darken the cross with smoke: for there is a way of preaching the gospel amid a smother of mystification and doubt so that men cannot perceive it. A numerous band of men are always boiling and stirring up a huge philosophic caldron, which steams with dense vapour, beclouding the cross of Christ most horribly. Alas for that wisdom which conceals the wisdom of God, it is the most guilty form of folly. Some people preach Christ as I have seen representations of a man-of-war in battle. The painter painted nothing but the smoke, and you have said, "Where is the ship?" Well, if you looked long you might discern a fragment of the top of one of the masts, and, perhaps, a portion of the boom; the ship was there, no doubt, but the smoke concealed it. So there may be Christ in some men's preaching, but there is such a cloud of thinking, such a dense pall of profundity,

such a horrid smoke of philosophy, that you cannot see the Lord. Paul painted beneath a clear sky, he would have no learned obscurity, he determined not to know how to speak after the manner of the orators, not to know how to think deeply according to the mode of the philosophers, but only to know Jesus Christ, and him crucified, and just to set him forth in his own natural beauties unadorned. He dispensed with those accessories which are so apt to attract the eye of the mind from the central point—Christ crucified. "A rash experiment," says one. Ah, brethren, it is the experiment of faith, and faith is justified of all her children. If we rely upon the power of mere suasion, we rely upon that which is born of the flesh; if we depend upon the power of logical argument, we again rely upon that which is born of men's reason; if we trust to poetic expressions and attractive turns of speech, we look to carnal means; but if we rest upon the naked omnipotence of a crucified Saviour, upon the innate power of the wondrous deed of love which was consummated upon Calvary, and believe that the Spirit of God will make this the instrument for the conversion of men, the experiment cannot possibly end in failure.

But oh, my brethren, what a task this must have been for Paul! He was not like some of us, who are neither familiar with philosophy, nor capable of oratory. He was so great a master of both, that he must have found it needful to keep himself constantly in check. I think I can see him every now and then when a deeply intellectual thought has come across his mind and a beautiful mode of utterance has suggested itself, reining himself up and saying to his mind, "I will leave these deep thoughts for the Romans, I will give them all this in the eighth chapter; but as for these Corinthians they shall have nothing but Christ crucified, for they are so carnal, so grossly slavish before talent, that they will run away with the idea that my excellent way of putting the truth was the power of it. They shall have Christ only, and only Christ. They are children, and I must

speak to them as such; they are mere babes in Christ, and have need of milk, and milk alone must I give them. They claim to be clever and learned, they are conceited, high-minded, full of divisions and controversies; I will give them nothing but 'the old, old story of Jesus and his love,' and I will tell them that story simply as to a little child." Boundless love to their souls thus made him concentrate his testimony upon the one central point of Jesus crucified.

Thus I have shown you what his subject was.

II. Now, secondly, ALTHOUGH PAUL THUS CONCENTRATED HIS ENERGIES UPON ONE POINT OF TESTIMONY, IT WAS QUITE SUFFICIENT FOR HIS PURPOSE. If the apostle had aimed at pleasing an intelligent audience, Christ and him crucified would not have done at all. If again he had designed to set himself up as a profound teacher he would naturally have looked out for something new, something a little more dazzling than the person and work of the Redeemer. And if Paul had desired, as I am afraid some of my brethren do, to collect together a class of highly independent minds, which is I believe the euphemism for free-thinkers—to draw together a select church of the men of culture and intellect, which generally means a club of men who despise the gospel, he certainly would not have kept to preaching Jesus Christ and him crucified. This order of men would deny him all hope of success with such a theme. They would assure him that such preaching would only attract the poorer sort and the less educated, the servant maids and the old women; but Paul would not have been disconcerted by such observations, for he loved the souls of the poorest and feeblest; and, besides, he knew that what had exercised power over his own educated mind was likely to have power over other intelligent people, and so he kept to the doctrine of the cross, believing that he had therein an instrument which would effectually accomplish his one design with all classes of men. Brethren, what did Paul wish to do? Paul desired first of all to arouse sinners to a sense of

sin, and what has ever accomplished this so perfectly as the doctrine that sin was laid upon Christ and caused his death? The sinner, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, sees at once that sin is not a trifle, that it is not to be forgiven without an atonement, but must be followed by penalty, borne by some one or other. When the guilty one has seen the Son of God bleeding to death in pangs unutterable in consequence of sin, he has learned that sin is an enormous and crushing burden. If even the Son of God cries out beneath it, if his death agony rends the heavens and shakes the earth, what an awful evil sin must be. What must it involve upon my soul if in my own person I shall be doomed to bear its consequences? Thus the sinner rightly argues, and thus is he aroused to a sense of guilt.

But Paul wanted also to awaken in the minds of the guilty that humble hope which is the great instrument of leading men to Jesus. He desired to make them hope that forgiveness might be given consistently with justice. Oh, brethren, Christ crucified is the one ray of light that can penetrate the thick darkness of despair, and make a penitent heart hope for pardon from the righteous Judge. Need a sinner ever doubt when he has once seen Jesus crucified? When he understands that there is pardon for every transgression through the bleeding wounds of Jesus, is not the best form of hope at once kindled in his bosom, and is he not led to say "I will arise and go unto my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned"?

Paul longed yet further to lead men to actual faith in Jesus Christ. Now, faith in Jesus Christ can only come by preaching Jesus Christ. Faith cometh by hearing, but the hearing must be upon the subject concerning which the faith is to deal. Would you make believers in Christ, preach Christ. The things of Christ, applied by the Spirit, lead men to put their reliance upon Christ. Nor was that all. Paul wanted men to forsake their sins, and what should lead them to hate evil so much as seeing the sufferings of Jesus on account of it. You

and I know the power of a bleeding Saviour to make us take revenge upon sin. What indignation, what searching of heart, what stern resolve, what bitterness of regret, what deep repentance have we felt when we have seen that our sins became the nails, the hammer, the spear, yea, the executioners of the Well-beloved?

And Paul longed to train up in Corinth a church of consecrated men, full of love, full of self-denial, a holy people, zealous for good works; and let me ask you, what more is there necessary to preach to any man to promote his sanctification and his consecration than Jesus Christ, who hath redeemed us and so made us for ever his servants? What argument is stronger than the fact that we are not our own, for we are bought with a price? I say that Paul had in Christ crucified a subject equal to his object; a subject that would meet the case of every man however degraded or however cultured, and a subject which would be useful to men in the first hours of the new birth and equally useful when they were made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. He had a subject for to-day and to-morrow, and a subject for next year, for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He had in the crucified Jesus a subject for the prince's palace and a subject for the peasant's hut, a subject for the market place and a subject for the academy, for the heathen temple and for the synagogue. Wherever he might go, Christ would be both to Jew and Gentile, to bond and free, the wisdom of God and the power of God, and that not to one form of beneficial influence alone, but unto full salvation to every one that believeth.

III. But I must pass on to a third remark, that THE APOSTLE'S CONFINING HIMSELF TO THIS SUBJECT COULD NOT POSSIBLY DO HARM. You know, brethren, that when men dwell exclusively upon one thing they get pretty strong there, but they generally become very weak in other points. Hence a man of one thought only is generally described as riding a hobby: well this was Paul's hobby, but it was a sort of hobby which

a man may ride without any injury to himself or his neighbour: he will be none the less a complete man if he surrenders himself wholly and only to this one theme.

But let me remark that Christ crucified is the only subject of which this can be said. Let me show you that it is so. You know a class of ministers who preach doctrine—and doctrine only. Their mode of preaching resembles the counting of your fingers,—"one, two, three, four, five," and for a variety, "five, four, three, two, one,"—always a certain set of great truths and no others. What is the effect of this ministry? Well, generally to breed a generation of men who think they know everything, but really do not know much: very decided, and so far good; but very narrow, very exclusive, very bigoted, and so far bad. You cannot preach doctrine alone without contracting your own mind and that of your hearers.

There are others who preach experience only. They are very good people; I am not condemning either them or their doctrinal friends, but they also fall into mischief. Some of them take the lower scale of experience, and they tell us that nobody can be a child of God, except he feels the horrible character of his inbred sin, and groans daily, being burdened. We used to hear a good deal of that some years ago, there is less of it now. Am I wrong in saying that this teaching trains up a race of men who show their humility by sitting in judgment upon all who cannot groan down to as deep a note as they can?

Another class has lately arisen who preach experience, but theirs is always upon the high key. They soar aloft, as I think, a little in the balloon line. They own only the bright side of experience, they have nothing to do with its darkness and death. For them there are no nights, they sing through perpetual summer days. They have conquered sin, and they have ignored themselves. *So they say*, but we should not have thought so if they had not told us so; on the contrary, we might have fancied

that they had a very vivid idea of themselves and their own attainments. I hope I am mistaken, but it has appeared to some of us poor fallible beings, that in some beloved brethren self had grown marvellously big of late; certainly their conventions and preachings largely consist of very wonderful declarations of their own admirable condition. I should be pleased to learn of their progress in grace, *if it be real;* but I had sooner have made the discovery myself, or have heard it from somebody else besides themselves, for there is an inspired proverb which says: "Let another praise thee, and not thine own lips," and, for my part, if any other man thought it right to praise me, I would rather that he held his tongue, for man-magnifying is a poor business. Let the Lord alone be magnified. I think it is clear that grave faults arise, one of exclusively preaching an inner life, instead of preaching Christ, who is the life itself.

Another class of ministers have preached the precepts and little else. We want these men as we want the others, they are all useful, and act as antidotes to each other, but their ministries are not complete. If you hear preaching about duty and command, it is very proper, but if it be the one sole theme the teaching becomes very legal in the long run; and after a while the true gospel which has the power to make us keep the precept gets flung into the background, and the precept is not kept after all. Do, do, do, generally ends in nothing being done.

If a brother were to undertake to preach the ordinances only, like those who are always extolling what they are pleased to call the holy sacraments—well, you know where that teaching goes—it has a tendency towards the south-east, and its chosen line runs across the city of Rome.

Moreover, beloved brother, even if you preach Jesus Christ you must not keep to any other phase of him but that which Paul took, namely, "him crucified," for under no other aspect may you exclusively regard

him. For instance, the preaching of the second advent, which, in its place and proportion, is admirable, has been by some taken out of its place, and made the end-all and be-all of their ministry. That, you see, is not what Paul had selected, and it is not a safe selection. In many cases sheer fanaticism has been the result of exclusively dwelling upon prophecy, and probably more men have gone mad on that subject than on any other religious question. Whether any man ever could become fanatical about Christ crucified I cannot say, I have never heard of such an instance. Whether a man ever went insane with love to the crucified Redeemer I do not know, but I have never met such a case. If I should ever go mad, I should like it to be in that direction, and I should like to bite a great many more; for what a blessed subject it would be for one to be carried away with, to become unreasonably absorbed in Christ crucified, to have gone out of your senses with faith in Jesus. The fact is, it never can injure the mind, it is a doctrine which may be heard for ever, and will be always fresh, new, and suitable to the whole of our manhood.

I say that the keeping to this doctrine cannot do hurt, and the reason is this: it contains all that is vital within itself. Keep within the limit of Christ, and him crucified, and you have brought before men all the essentials for this life and for the life to come; you have given them the root out of which may grow both branch and flower, and fruit of holy thought and word and deed. Let a man know Christ crucified, and he knows him whom to know is life eternal. This is a subject which does not arouse one part of the man, and send the other part to sleep; it does not kindle his imagination and leave his judgment uninstructed, nor feed his intellect and starve his heart. There is not a faculty of our nature but what Christ crucified affects for good. The perfect manhood of Christ crucified affects mind, heart, memory, imagination, thought, everything. As in milk there are all the ingredients necessary for sustaining life, so in Christ crucified there is everything that is wanted

to nurture the soul. Even as the hand of David's chief minstrel touched every chord of his ten-stringed harp, so Jesus brings sweet music out of our entire manhood.

There is also this to be said about preaching Christ exclusively, that it will never produce animosities. It will not impregnate men's minds with questions and contentions, as those nice points do which some are so fond of dealing with. When certain questions are settled by my judgment and by your judgment, and by a third and a fourth man's judgment, a contest is sure to ensue; but he who stands at Christ's cross, and keeps there, stands where he may embrace the whole brotherhood of true Christians, for we are perfectly joined together in one mind and judgment there. There is no vaunting of man's judgment at the cross. "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Christ," comes from not keeping to Jesus crucified; but if we keep to the cross as guilty sinners needing cleansing through the precious blood, and finding all our salvation there, we shall not have time to set ourselves up as religious leaders, and to cause divisions in the church of Christ. Was there ever yet a sect created in Christendom by the preaching of Christ crucified? No, my brethren, sects are created by the preaching of something over and above this, but this is the soul and marrow of Christianity, and consequently the perfect bond of love which holds Christians together.

IV. I shall not say more, but pass on to my last reflection, which is this: Because, then, Paul made this his one sole subject amongst the Corinthians, and he did no hurt by so doing, which cannot be said of any other subject, I COMMEND TO YOU THAT WE SHOULD ALL OF US MAKE THIS THE MAIN SUBJECT OF OUR THOUGHTS, PREACHING, AND EFFORTS.

Unconverted men and women, to you I speak first. To you I have nothing else to preach but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Paul knew there were great sinners at Corinth, for it was common all over the then world to call a licentious man a Corinthian. They were a

people who pushed laxity and lasciviousness of manners to the greatest possible excess, yet among them Paul knew nothing but Christ and him crucified, because all that the greatest sinner can possibly want is to be found there. You have nothing in yourself, sinner, and you need not wish for anything to carry to Jesus. You tell me you know nothing about the profound doctrines of the gospel: you need not know them when coming to Christ. The one thing you need to know is this, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to save sinners, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. I shall be glad for you to be further instructed in the faith, and to know the heights and depths of that love which passeth knowledge, but just now the one thing you require to know is Jesus Christ crucified, and if you never get beyond that, if your mind should be of so feeble a cast that anything deeper than this you should never be able to grasp, I for one shall feel no distress whatever, for you will have found that which will deliver you from the power of sin and from the punishment of it, and that which will take you up to heaven to dwell where that same Jesus who was crucified sits enthroned at the right hand of God. Oh, dear broken heart, if thou wouldest find healing, it is in those wounds. If thou wouldest find rest thou must have it from those pierced hands. If thou wouldest hear absolution, it must be spoken from those same lips which said so sweetly, "It is finished." God forbid that we should know anything among sinners except Christ and him crucified. Look to him, and him only, and you shall find rest unto your souls.

As for you, my brethren and sisters, who know Christ, I have this to say to you: keep this to the front, and nothing else but this, for it is against this that the enemy rages. That part of the line of battle which is most fiercely assailed by the enemy is sure to be that which he knows to be most important to carry. Men hate those they fear. The antagonism of the enemies of the gospel is mainly against the cross. From the very first

it was so. They cried "Let him come down from the cross and we will believe in him." They will write us pretty lives of Christ and tell us what an excellent man he was, and do our Lord such homage as their Judas' lips can afford him; they will also take his sermon on the mount and say what a wonderful insight he had into the human heart, and what a splendid code of morals he taught, and so on. "We will be Christians," say they, "but the dogma of atonement we utterly reject." Our answer is, we do not care one farthing what they have to say about our Master if they deny his substitutionary sacrifice, whether they give him wine or vinegar is a small question so long as they reject the claims of the Crucified. The praises of unbelievers are sickening; who wants to hear polluted lips lauding *him?* Such sugared words are very like those which came out of the mouth of the devil when he said "Thou Son of the Highest," and Jesus rebuked him and said "Hold thy peace, and come out of him." Even thus would we say to unbelievers who extol Christ's life: "Hold your peace! We know your enmity, disguise it as you may. Jesus is the Saviour of men or he is nothing; if you will not have Christ crucified you cannot have him at all." My brethren in Jesus let us glory in the blood of Jesus, let it be conspicuous as though it were sprinkled upon the lintel and the two side posts of our doors, and let the world know that redemption by blood is written upon the innermost tablets of our hearts.

Brethren, this is the test point of every teacher. When a fish goes bad they say it first stinks at the head, and certainly when a preacher becomes heretical it is always about Christ. If he is not clear about Jesus crucified, and you hear one sermon from him—that is your misfortune: but if you go and hear him again, and hear another like the first, it will be your fault: go a third time, and it will be your crime. If any man be doubtful about Christ crucified, recollect Hart's couplet, for it is a truth—

"You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of him."

I do not want to examine men upon all the doctrines of the Westminster Assembly's Confession. I begin here, "What think ye of Christ?" If you cannot answer that question, go and publish your own views where you like, but you and I are wide as the poles asunder, neither do I wish to have fellowship with you. We must have plain speaking here.

It is "Christ crucified" which God blesses to conversion. God blessed William Huntingdon to the conversion of souls: I am sure of that, though I am no Huntingdonian. He blessed John Wesley to the conversion of souls: I am quite as clear about that, though I am not a Wesleyan. The point upon which the Lord blessed them both was that wherein they bore testimony to Christ; and you shall find that in proportion as Jesus Christ's atonement is in a sermon it is the life-blood of that sermon, and is that which God sanctifies to the conversion of the sons of men. Therefore, keep it always prominent.

And I ask you now, my brethren, one thing more; is not Christ and him crucified the thing to live on and the thing to die on? Worldlings can live upon their flimsies, they can delight themselves under their Jonah's gourds while they last; but when a man is depressed in spirit, and tortured in body, where does he look? If he be a Christian, where does he fly? Where, indeed, but to Jesus crucified? How often have I been glad to creep into the temple and stand in the poor publican's shoes, and say "God be merciful to me a sinner," looking only to that mercy-seat which Jesus sprinkled with his precious blood. This will do to *die* with. I do not believe we shall die seeking consolation from our peculiar church organisations; nor shall we die grasping with a dying clutch either ordinance or doctrine by itself. Our soul must live and die on Jesus crucified. Notice all the saints when they die whether they do not get back to Calvary's great sacrifice. They believed a great

many things; some of them had many crotchets and whims and oddities, but the main point comes uppermost in death. "Jesus died for me, Jesus died for me"—they all come to that. Well, where they get at last do you not think it would be well to go at first; and if that be the bottom of it all, and it certainly is, would it not be as well for us to keep to that? While some are glorying in this, and some in that, some have this form of worship and some that, let us say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me and I unto the world."

Brethren, I commend to you more and more the bringing of the cross of Christ into prominence, because it is this which will weld us more and more closely to one another, and will keep us in blessed unity. We cannot all understand those peculiar truths which depend very much upon nice points, and shades of meaning in the Greek, which only critics can bring out. If you are going in for these pretty things, brother, you must leave behind many of us poor fools, for we cannot go in for these things, and you only puzzle us. I know you have got that dainty point very beautifully in your own mind, and you think a great deal of it, and I do not wonder, for it has cost you a good deal of thinking, and it shows your powerful discernment. At the same time, do you not think you ought to condescend to some of us who never will as long as ever we live take up with these knotty points? Some of our brains are of an ordinary sort. We have to earn our bread and we mingle with ordinary people; we know that twice two will make four; but we are not acquainted with all the recondite principles which lie concealed in the lofty philosophy to which you have climbed. I do not know much about it, I do not climb to such elevations myself, and I shall never get up there along with you: might it not be better for the unity of the faith that you would kindly leave some of these things alone, agree better with your friends at home, show more love to your fellow Christians, and

attend a little more to commonplace duties? I do not know but what it might do you good, and bring a little of your humility to the front, if you kept down there with Jesus Christ and him crucified. Personally I might know a host of things—I specially might, for everybody tries to teach me something. I get advice by the waggon-load: one pulls this ear and one pulls that. Well, I might know a great deal, but I find I should have to leave some of you behind if I went off to these things, and I love you too well for that. I am determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified. If any man will keep to that, I will say, "Give me your hand, my brother, Jesus washed it with his blood as he did mine. Come, brother, let us look up together at the same cross. What dost thou make of it?" There is a tear in your eye, and there is one in mine, but yet there is a flush of joy upon both our faces, because of the dear love that nailed Jesus there. "What shall we do in the sight of this cross?" My brother says, "I will go and win souls," and I say, "So will I." He says, "I have one way of speaking," and I reply, "I have another, for our gifts differ, but we will never clash, for we are serving one Lord and one Master, and we will not be divided either in this world or in that which is to come." Let Apollos say what he likes, or Paul or Peter, we will learn from them all, and be very glad to do so, but still from the cross we will not move, but stand fast there, for Jesus is the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega. Amen.

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS.

"Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel."—2 TIMOTHY ii. 8.

FROM long sickness my mind is scarcely equal to the work before me. Certainly, if I had ever sought after brilliance of thought or language, I should have failed to-day, for I am almost at the lowest stage of incapacity. I have only been comforted in the thought of preaching to you this morning by the reflection that it is the doctrine itself which God blesses, and not the way in which it may be spoken; for if God had made the power to depend upon the speaker and his style, he would have chosen that the resurrection, grandest of all truths, should have been proclaimed by angels rather than by men. Yet he set aside the seraph for the humbler creature. After angels had spoken a word or two to the women their testimony ceased. The most prominent testimony to the resurrection of the Lord was at the first that of holy women, and afterwards that of each one of the guileless men and women who made up the five hundred or more whose privilege it was to have actually seen the risen Saviour, and who therefore could bear witness to what they had seen, though they may have been quite unable to describe with eloquence what they had beheld. Upon our Lord's rising I have nothing to say, and God's ministers have nothing to say, beyond bearing witness to the fact that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead. Put it in poetry, tell it out in sublime Miltonic verse, it will come to no more; tell it out in mono-

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syllables, and write it so that little children may read it in their first spelling-books, and it will come to nothing less. "The Lord is risen indeed" is the sum and substance of our witness when we speak of our risen Redeemer. If we do but know the truth of this resurrection, and feel the power of it, our mode of utterance is of secondary consequence; for the Holy Spirit will bear witness to the truth, and cause it to produce fruit in the minds of our hearers.

Our present text is found in Paul's second letter to Timothy. The venerable minister is anxious about the young man who has preached with remarkable success, and whom he regards in some respects as his successor. The old man is about to put off his tabernacle, and he is concerned that his son in the gospel should preach the same truth as his father has preached, and should by no means adulterate the gospel. A tendency showed itself in Timothy's day, and the same tendency exists at this very hour, to try to get away from the simple matters of fact upon which our religion is built, to something more philosophical and hard to be understood. The word which the common people heard gladly is not fine enough for cultured sages, and so they must needs surround it with a mist of human thought and speculation. Three or four plain facts constitute the gospel, even as Paul puts it in the fifteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Upon the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus our salvation hinges. He who believes these truths aright hath believed the gospel, and believing the gospel he shall without doubt find eternal salvation therein. But men want novelties; they cannot endure that the trumpet should give forth the same certain sound, they crave some fresh fantasia every day. "*The gospel with variations*" is the music for them. Intellect is progressive, they say; they must

therefore, march ahead of their forefathers. Incarnate Deity, a holy life, an atoning death, and a literal resurrection,—having heard these things now for nearly nineteen centuries they are just a little stale, and the cultivated mind hungers for a change from the old-fashioned manna. Even in Paul's day this tendency was manifest, and so they sought to regard facts as mysteries or parables, and they laboured to find a spiritual meaning in them till they went so far as to deny them as actual facts. Seeking a recondite meaning, they overlooked the fact itself, losing the substance in a foolish preference for the shadow. While God set before them glorious events which fill heaven with amazement they showed their foolish wisdom by accepting the plain historical facts as myths to be interpreted or riddles to be solved. He who believed as a little child was pushed aside as a fool that the disputer and the scribe might come in to mystify simplicity, and hide the light of truth. Hence there had arisen a certain Hymenæus and Philetus, "Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." Turn to verse seventeen and read for yourselves. They spirited away the resurrection; they made it to mean something very deep and mystical, and in the process they took away the actual resurrection altogether. Among men there is still a craving after new meanings, refinements upon old doctrines, and spiritualizations of literal facts. They tear out the bowels of the truth, and give us the carcase stuffed with hypotheses, speculations, and larger hopes. The golden shields of Solomon are taken away, and shields of brass are hung up in their stead: will they not answer every purpose, and is not the metal more in favour with the age? It may be so, but we never admired Rehoboam, and we are old-fashioned enough to prefer the original shields of gold. The Apostle Paul was very anxious that Timothy at least should stand firm to the old witness, and should understand in their plain meaning his testimonies to the fact that

Jesus Christ of the seed of David rose again from the dead.

Within the compass of this verse several facts are recorded: and, first, there is here the great truth that Jesus, the Son of the Highest, was anointed of God; the apostle calls him "Jesus *Christ*," that is, the anointed one, the Messiah, the sent of God. He calls him also "*Jesus*," which signifies a Saviour, and it is a grand truth that he who was born of Mary, he who was laid in the manger at Bethlehem, he who loved and lived and died for us, is the ordained and anointed Saviour of men. We have not a moment's doubt about the mission, office, and design of our Lord Jesus; in fact, we hang our soul's salvation upon his being anointed of the Lord to be the Saviour of men.

This Jesus Christ was really and truly man; for Paul says he was "*of the seed of David.*" True he was divine, and his birth was not after the ordinary manner of men, but still he was in all respects partaker of our human nature, and came of the stock of David. This also we do believe. We are not among those who spiritualize the incarnation, and suppose that God was here as a phantom, or that the whole story is but an instructive legend. Nay, in very flesh and blood did the Son of God abide among men: bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh was he in the days of his sojourn here below. We know and believe that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. We love the incarnate God, and in him we fix our trust.

It is implied, too, in the text that *Jesus died;* for he could not be raised from the dead if he had not first gone down among the dead, and been one of them. Yes, Jesus died: the crucifixion was no delusion, the piercing of his side with a spear was most clear and evident proof that he was dead: his heart was pierced, and the blood and water flowed therefrom. As a dead man he was taken down from the cross and carried by gentle hands, and laid in Joseph's virgin tomb. I think I see that pale corpse, white as a lily Mark how it is

distained with the blood of his five wounds, which make him red as the rose. See how the holy women tenderly wrap him in fine linen with sweet spices, and leave him to spend his Sabbath all alone in the rock-hewn sepulchre. No man in this world was ever more surely dead than he. "He made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death." As dead they laid him in the place of the dead, with napkin and grave-clothes, and habiliments fit for a grave: then they rolled the great stone at the grave's mouth and left him, knowing that he was dead.

Then comes the grand truth, that as soon as ever the third sun commenced his shining circuit *Jesus rose again.* His body had not decayed, for it was not possible for that holy thing to see corruption; but still it had been dead; and by the power of God—by his own power, by the Father's power, by the power of the Spirit—for it is attributed to each of these in turn, before the sun had risen his dead body was quickened. The silent heart began again to beat, and through the stagnant canals of the veins the life-flood began to circulate. The soul of the Redeemer again took possession of the body, and it lived once more. There he was within the sepulchre, as truly living as to all parts of him as he had ever been. He literally and truly, in a material body, came forth from the tomb to live among men till the hour of his ascension into heaven. This is the truth which is still to be taught, refine it who may, spiritualize it who dare. This is the historical fact which the apostles witnessed; this is the truth for which the confessors bled and died. This is the doctrine which is the keystone of the arch of Christianity, and they that hold it not have cast aside the essential truth of God. How can they hope for salvation for their souls if they do not believe that "the Lord is risen indeed"?

This morning I wish to do three things. First, let us *consider the bearings of the resurrection of Christ upon other great truths;* secondly, let us consider *the bearings of this fact upon the gospel,* for it has such bearings.

according to the text—"Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel"; thirdly, let us *consider its bearings on ourselves*, which are all indicated in the word "Remember."

I. First, then, beloved, as God shall help us, let us CONSIDER THE BEARINGS OF THE FACT THAT JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD.

It is clear at the outset that *the resurrection of our Lord was a tangible proof that there is another life.* Have you not quoted a great many times certain lines about "That undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns"? It is not so. There was once a traveller who said that "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go away I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." He said, "A little time and ye shall see me, and again a little time and ye shall not see me, and because I go to the Father." Do you not remember these words of his? Our divine Lord went to the undiscovered country, and he returned. He said that at the third day he would be back again, and he was true to his word. There is no doubt that there is another state for human life, for Jesus has been in it, and has come back from it. We have no doubt as to a future existence, for Jesus existed after death. We have no doubt as to a paradise of future bliss, for Jesus went to it and returned. Though he has left us again, yet that coming back to tarry with us forty days has given us a sure pledge that he will return a second time when the hour is due, and then will be with us for a thousand years, and reign on earth amongst his ancients gloriously. His return from among the dead is a pledge to us of existence after death, and we rejoice in it.

His resurrection is also a pledge that the body will surely live again and rise to a superior condition; for the body of our blessed Master was no phantom after death any more than before. "Handle me, and see." Oh wondrous proof! He said, "Handle me, and see"; and then to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and

behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side." What deception is possible here ? The risen Jesus was no mere spirit. He promptly cried, " A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." " Bring me," said he, " something to eat " ; and as if to show how real his body was, though he did not need to eat, yet he did eat, and a piece of a broiled fish and of an honeycomb were proofs of the reality of the act. Now, the body of our Lord in its risen state did not exhibit the whole of his glorification ; for otherwise we should have seen John falling at his feet as dead, and we should have seen all his disciples overcome with the glory of the vision ; but, still, in a great measure, we may call the forty days' sojourn—" The life of Jesus in his glory upon earth." He was no longer despised and rejected of men ; but a glory surrounded him. It is evident that the raised body passed from place to place in a single moment, that it appeared and vanished at will, and was superior to the laws of matter. The risen body was incapable of pain, of hunger, thirst, and weariness during the time in which it remained here below,—fit representative of the bulk of which it was the first-fruits. Of our body also it shall be said ere long, " It was sown in weakness, it is raised in power : it was sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory." Let us, then, as we think of the risen Christ, rest quite sure of a future life, and quite sure that our body will exist in it in a glorified condition.

I do not know whether you are ever troubled with doubts in connection with the world to come as to whether it can be true that we shall live eternally. Here is the respect which makes death so terrible to doubters ; for while they have realized the grave, they have not realized the life beyond it. Now, the best help to that realization is a firm grip of the fact that Jesus died and Jesus rose again. This fact is proved better than any other event in history ; the witness to it is far stronger than to anything else that is written either in profane or sacred records. The rising of our Lord Jesus

Christ being certain, you may rest assured of the existence of another world. That is the first bearing of this great truth.

Secondly, *Christ's rising from the dead was the seal to all his claims.* It was true, then, that he was sent of God, for God raised him from the dead in confirmation of his mission. He had said himself, "Destroy this body, and in three days I will raise it up." Lo, there he is: the temple of his body is rebuilt! He had even given this as a sign, that as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so should the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, and should then come forth to life again. Behold his own appointed sign fulfilled! Before men's eye the seal is manifest! Suppose he had never risen. You and I might have believed in the truth of a certain mission which God had given him; but we could never have believed in the truth of such a commission as he claimed to have received—a commission to be our Redeemer from death and hell. How could he be our ransom from the grave if he had himself remained under the dominion of death?

Dear friends, the rising of Christ from the dead proved that this man was innocent of every sin. He could not be holden by the bands of death, for there was no sin to make those bands fast. Corruption could not touch his pure body, for no original sin had defiled the Holy One. Death could not keep him a continual prisoner, because he had not actually come under sin; and though he took sin of ours, and bore it by imputation, and therefore died, yet he had no fault of his own, and must, therefore, be set free when his imputed load had been removed.

Moreover, Christ's rising from the dead proved his claim to Deity. We are told in another place that he was proved to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. He raised himself by his own power, and though the Father and the Holy Spirit were co-operative with him, and hence his resurrection

is ascribed to them, yet it was because the Father had given him to have life in himself, that therefore he arose from the dead. Oh, risen Saviour, thy rising is the seal of thy work! We can have no doubt about thee now that thou hast left the tomb. Prophet of Nazareth, thou art indeed the Christ of God, for God has loosed the bands of death for thee! Son of David, thou art indeed the elect and precious One, for thou ever livest! Thy resurrection life has set the sign-manual of heaven to all that thou hast said and done, and for this we bless and magnify thy name.

A third bearing of his resurrection is this, and it is a very grand one,—*The resurrection of our Lord, according to Scripture, was the acceptance of his sacrifice.* By the Lord Jesus Christ rising from the dead evidence was given that he had fully endured the penalty which was due to human guilt. "The soul that sinneth it shall die"—that is the determination of the God of heaven. Jesus stands in the sinner's stead and dies: and when he has done *that* nothing more can be demanded of him, for he that is dead is free from the law. You take a man who has been guilty of a capital offence: he is condemned to be hanged, he is hanged by the neck till he is dead—what more has the law to do with him? It has done with him, for it has executed its sentence upon him; if he can be brought back to life again he is clear from the law; no writ that runs in Her Majesty's dominions can touch him—he has suffered the penalty. So when our Lord Jesus rose from the dead, after having died, he had fully paid the penalty that was due to justice for the sin of his people, and his new life was a life clear of penalty, free from liability. You and I are clear from the claims of the law because Jesus stood in our stead, and God will not exact payment both from us and from our Substitute: it were contrary to justice to sue both the Surety and those for whom he stood. And now, joy upon joy! the burden of liability which once did lie upon the Substitute is removed from him also; seeing he has by the suffering of death vindicated

justice and made satisfaction to the injured law. Now both the sinner and the Surety are free. This is a great joy, a joy for which to make the golden harps ring out a loftier style of music. He who took our debt has now delivered himself from it by dying on the cross. His new life, now that he has risen from the dead, is a life free from legal claim, and it is the token to us that we whom he represented are free also. Listen! "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again." It is a knockdown blow to fear when the apostle says that we cannot be condemned because Christ has died in our stead, but he puts a double force into it when he cries, "Yea rather, that is risen again." If Satan, therefore, shall come to any believer and say, "What about your sin?" tell him Jesus died for it, and your sin is put away. If he come a second time, and say to you, "What about your sin?" answer him, "Jesus lives, and his life is the assurance of our justification; for if our Surety had not paid the debt he would still be under the power of death." Inasmuch as Jesus has discharged all our liabilities, and left not one farthing due to God's justice from one of his people, he lives and is clear, and we live in him, and are clear also by virtue of our union with him. Is not this a glorious doctrine, this doctrine of the resurrection, in its bearing upon the justification of the saints? The Lord Jesus gave himself for our sins, but he rose again for our justification.

Bear with me while I notice, next, another bearing of this resurrection of Christ. *It was a guarantee of his people's resurrection.* There is a great truth that never is to be forgotten, namely, that Christ and his people are one just as Adam and all his seed are one. That which Adam did he did as a head for a body, and as our Lord Jesus and all believers are one, so that which Jesus did he did as a head for a body. We were crucified together with Christ, we were buried with Christ, and we are risen together with him; yea, he hath raised us

up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. He says, "Because I live ye shall live also." If Christ be not raised from the dead your faith is vain, and our preaching is vain, and ye are yet in your sins, and those that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, and you will perish too; but if Christ has been raised from the dead then all his people must be raised also; it is a matter of gospel necessity. There is no logic more imperative than the argument drawn from union with Christ. God has made the saints one with Christ, and if Christ has risen all the saints must rise too. My soul takes firm hold on this and as she strengthens her grasp she loses all fear of death. Now we bear our dear ones to the cemetery and leave them each one in his narrow cell, calmly bidding him farewell and saying—

> "So Jesus slept: God's dying Son
> Pass'd through the grave, and blest the bed;
> Rest here, dear saint, till from his throne
> The morning break, and pierce the shade."

It is not merely ours to know that our brethren are living in heaven, but also that their mortal parts are in divine custody, securely kept till the appointed hour when the body shall be reanimated, and the perfect man shall enjoy the adoption of God. We are sure that our dead men shall live; together with Christ's dead body they shall rise. No power can hold in durance the redeemed of the Lord. "Let my people go" shall be a command as much obeyed by death as once by the humbled Pharaoh who could not hold a single Israelite in bonds. The day of deliverance cometh on apace.

> "Break from His throne, illustrious morn!
> Attend, O earth, His sovereign word;
> Restore thy trust, a glorious form:
> He must ascend to meet his Lord."

Once more, *our Lord's rising from the dead is a fair picture of the new life which all believers already enjoy.* Beloved, though this body is still subject to bondage

like the rest of the visible creation, according to the law stated in Scripture, "the body is dead because of sin," yet "the spirit is life because of righteousness." The regeneration which has taken place in those who believe has changed our spirit, and given to it eternal life, but it has not affected our body further than this, that it has made it to be the temple of the Holy Ghost, and thus it is a holy thing, and cannot be obnoxious to the Lord, or swept away among unholy things; but still the body is subject to pain and weariness, and to the supreme sentence of death. Not so the spirit. There is within us already a part of the resurrection accomplished, since it is written, "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." You once were like the ungodly, under the law of sin and death, but you have been brought out of the bondage of corruption into the liberty of life and grace; the Lord having wrought in you gloriously, "according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

Now, just as Jesus Christ led, after his resurrection, a life very different from that before his death, so you and I are called upon to live a high and noble spiritual and heavenly life, seeing that we have been raised from the dead to die no more. Let us joy and rejoice in this. Let us behave as those who are alive from the dead, the happy children of the resurrection. Do not let us be money-grabbers, or hunters after worldly fame. Let us not set our affections on the foul things of this dead and rotten world, but let our hearts fly upward, like young birds that have broken loose of their shells—upward towards our Lord and the heavenly things upon which he would have us set our minds. Living truth, living work, living faith, these are the things for living men: let us cast off the graveclothes of our former lusts, and wear the garments of light and life. May the Spirit of God help us in further meditating upon these things at home.

II. Now, secondly, LET US CONSIDER THE BEARINGS OF THIS FACT OF THE RESURRECTION UPON THE GOSPEL; for Paul says, "Jesus Christ was raised from the dead *according to my gospel.*" I always like to see what way any kind of statement bears on the gospel. I may not have many more opportunities of preaching, and I make up my mind to this one thing, that I will waste no time upon secondary themes, but when I do preach it shall be the gospel, or something very closely bearing upon it. I will endeavour each time to strike under the fifth rib, and never beat the air. Those who have a taste for the superfluities may take their fill of them, it is for me to keep to the great necessary truths by which men's souls are saved. My work is to preach Christ crucified and the gospel, which gives men salvation through faith. I hear every now and then of very taking sermons about some bright new nothing or another. Some preachers remind me of the emperor who had a wonderful skill in carving men's heads upon cherry stones. What a multitude of preachers we have who can make wonderfully fine discourses out of a mere passing thought, of no consequence to anyone. But we want the gospel. We have to live and die, and we must have the gospel. Certain of us may be cold in our graves before many weeks are over, and we cannot afford to toy and trifle: we want to see the bearings of all teachings upon our eternal destinies, and upon the gospel which sheds its light over our future.

The resurrection of Christ is vital, because first it tells us that *the gospel is the gospel of a living Saviour.* We have not to send poor penitents to the crucifix, the dead image of a dead man. We say not, "These be thy gods, O Israel!" We have not to send you to a little baby Christ nursed by a woman. Nothing of the sort. Behold the Lord that liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and of death! Behold in him a living and accessible Saviour who out of the glory still cries with loving accents "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden

and I will give you rest." "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." I say we have a living Saviour, and is not this a glorious feature of the gospel?

Notice next that *we have a powerful Saviour* in connection with the gospel that we preach; for he who had power to raise himself from the dead, has all power now that he is raised. He who in death vanquishes death, can much more conquer by his life. He who being in the grave did, nevertheless, burst all its bonds, can assuredly deliver all his people. He who, coming under the power of the law, did, nevertheless, fulfil the law, and thus set his people free from bondage, must be mighty to save. You need a Saviour strong and mighty, yet you do not want one stronger than he of whom it is written that he rose again from the dead. What a blessed gospel we have to preach,—the gospel of a living Christ who hath himself returned from the dead leading captivity captive.

And now notice, that we have *the gospel of complete justification* to preach to you. We do not come and say, "Brethren, Jesus Christ by his death did something by which men may be saved if they have a mind to be, and diligently carry out their good resolves." No, no; we say Jesus Christ took the sin of his people upon himself and bore the consequences of it in his own body on the tree, so that he died; and having died, and so paid the penalty, he lives again; and now all for whom he died, all his people whose sins he bore, are free from the guilt of sin. You ask me, "Who are they?" and I reply, as many as believe on him. Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ is as free from the guilt of sin as Christ is. Our Lord Jesus took the sin of his people, and died in the sinner's stead, and now being himself set free, all his people are set free in their Representative. This doctrine is worth preaching. One may well rise from his bed to talk about perfect justification through faith in Christ Jesus. One might as well

keep asleep as rise to say that Jesus accomplished little or nothing by his passion and his rising. Some seem to dream that Jesus made some little opening by which we have a slight chance of reaching pardon and eternal life, if we are diligent for many years. This is not our gospel. Jesus has saved his people. He has performed the work entrusted to him. He has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness, and whosoever believeth in him is not condemned, and never can be.

Once again, the connection of the resurrection and the gospel is this, *it proves the safety of the saints*, for if when Christ rose his people rose also they rose to a life like that of their Lord, and therefore they can never die. It is written, "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him," and it is so with the believer: if you have been dead with Christ and are risen with Christ, death has no more dominion over you; you shall never go back to the beggarly elements of sin, you shall never become what you were before your regeneration. You shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of Jesus' hand. He has put within you a living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever. He says himself, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of living water springing up unto everlasting life." Wherefore hold ye fast to this, and let the resurrection of your Lord be the pledge of your own final perseverance.

Brethren, I cannot stop to show you how this resurrection touches the gospel at every point, but Paul is always full of it. More than thirty times Paul talks about the resurrection, and occasionally at great length, giving whole chapters to the glorious theme. The more I think of it the more I delight to preach Jesus and the resurrection. The glad tidings that Christ has risen is as truly the gospel as the doctrine that he came among men and for men presented his blood as a ransom. If angels sang glory to God in the highest when the Lord was

born, I feel impelled to repeat the note now that he is risen from the dead.

III. And so I come to my last head, and to the practical conclusion: THE BEARING OF THIS RESURRECTION UPON OURSELVES. Paul expressly bids us "Remember" it. "Why," says one, "we don't forget it." Are you sure you do not? I find myself far too forgetful of divine truths. We ought not to forget, for this first day of the week is consecrated for Sabbatic purposes to constrain us to think of the resurrection. On the seventh day men celebrated a finished creation, on the first day we celebrate a finished redemption. Bear it, then, in mind. Now, if you will remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David rose from the dead, what will follow?

First, you will find that *most of your trials will vanish.* Are you tried by your sin? Jesus Christ rose again from the dead for your justification. Does Satan accuse? Jesus rose to be your advocate and intercessor. Do infirmities hinder? The living Christ will show himself strong on your behalf. You have a living Christ, and in him you have all things. Do you dread death? Jesus, in rising again, has vanquished the last enemy. He will come and meet you when it is your turn to pass through the chill stream, and you shall ford it in sweet company. What is your trouble? I care not what it is, for if you will only think of Jesus as living, full of power, full of love, and full of sympathy, having experienced all your trials, even unto death, you will have such a confidence in his tender care and in his boundless ability that you will follow in his footsteps without a question. Remember Jesus, and that he rose again from the dead, and your confidence will rise as on eagles' wings.

Next remember Jesus, for then you will see how your present sufferings are as nothing compared with his sufferings, and you will learn to *expect victory over your sufferings even as he obtained victory.* Kindly look at the chapter, and you will find the apostle there saying in the third verse, "Thou therefore endure hardness,

as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," and further on in the eleventh verse, "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead in him, we shall also live in him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." Now, then, when you are called to suffer, think,—"Jesus suffered, yet Jesus rose again from the dead; he came up out of his baptism of griefs the better and more glorious for it, and so shall I!" Wherefore go you into the furnace at the Lord's bidding, and do not fear that the smell of fire shall pass upon you. Go you even down into the grave, and do not think that the worm shall make an end of you any more than it did of him. Behold in the risen One the type and model of what you are and are to be! Wherefore fear not, for he conquered! Stand not trembling, but march boldly on, for Jesus Christ of the seed of David rose from the dead, and you who are of the seed of the promise shall rise again from all your trials and afflictions, and live a glorious life.

We see here, dear brethren, in being told to remember Jesus that *there is hope even in our hopelessness.* When are things most hopeless in a man? Why, when he is dead. Do you know what it is to come down to that, so far as your inward weakness is concerned? I do. At times it seems to me that all my joy is buried like a dead thing, and all my present usefulness and all my hope of being useful in the future are coffined and laid underground like a corpse. In the anguish of my spirit, and the desolation of my heart, I could count it better to die than to live. You say it should not be so. I grant you it should not be so, but so it is. Many things happen within the minds of poor mortals which should not happen; if we had more courage and more faith they would not happen. Ay, but when we go down, down, down, is it not a blessed thing that Jesus Christ of the seed of David died, and was raised from the dead? If I sink right down among the dead men yet will I hold to this blessed hope, that as Jesus rose again from the dead, so also shall my joy, my usefulness, my hope, my spirit rise. "Thou, which hast showed us

great and sore troubles, shalt quicken us again, and bring us up from the lowest depths of the earth." This down-casting and slaying is good for us. We take a deal of killing, and it is by being killed that we live. Many a man will never live till his proud self is slain. O proud Pharisee, if you are to live among those whom God accepts, you will have to come to the slaughter-house and be cut in pieces as well as killed. "This is dreadful work," saith one, "this dividing of joints and marrow, this spiritual dismemberment and destruction." Assuredly it is painful, and yet it were a grievous loss to be denied it. Alas, how many are so good and excellent, and strong and wise, and clever, and all that, that they cannot agree to be saved by grace through faith. If they could be reduced to less than nothing it would be the finest thing that ever happened to them. Remember what Solomon said might be done with the fool, and yet it would not answer—he was to be brayed in a mortar among wheat with a pestle,—pretty hard dealing that, and yet his folly would not depart from him. Not by that process alone, but through some such method, the Holy Spirit brings men away from their folly. Under his killing operations this may be their comfort that, if Jesus Christ rose literally from the dead (not from sickness, but from death), and lives again, even so will his people. Did you ever get, where Bunyan pictures Christian as getting, right under the old dragon's foot? He is very heavy, and presses the very breath out of a fellow when he makes him his footstool. Poor Christian lay there with the dragon's foot on his breast; but he was just able to stretch out his hand and lay hold on his sword, which, by a good providence, lay within his reach. Then he gave Apollyon a deadly thrust, which made him spread his dragon wings and fly away. The poor crushed and broken pilgrim, as he gave the stab to his foe, cried, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; though I fall, yet shall I rise again." Brother, do you the same. You that are near despair, let this be the strength that nerves your arm and steels your heart.

"Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to Paul's gospel."

Lastly, this proves *the futility of all opposition to Christ.* The learned are going to destroy the Christian religion. Already, according to their boastings, it has pretty nearly come to an end. The pulpit is effete, it cannot command public attention. We stand up and preach to empty benches! As you see—*or do not see.* Nothing remains for us but to die decently, so they insinuate. And what then? When our Lord was dead, when the clay-cold corpse lay, watched by the Roman soldiery, and with a seal upon the enclosing stone, was not the cause in mortal jeopardy? But how fared it? Did it die out? Every disciple that Jesus had made forsook him, and fled. Was not Christianity then destroyed? Nay, that very day our Lord won a victory which shook the gates of hell, and caused the universe to stand astonished. Matters are not worse with him at this hour! His affairs are not in a sadder condition to-day than then. Nay, see him to-day and judge. On his head are many crowns, and at his feet the hosts of angels bow! Jesus is the master of legions to-day, while the Cæsars have passed away! Here are his people—needy, obscure, despised, I grant you, still, but assuredly somewhat more numerous than they were when they laid him in the tomb. His cause is not to be crushed, it is forever rising. Year after year, century after century, bands of true and honest hearts are marching up to the assault of the citadel of Satan. The prince of this world has a stronghold here on earth, and we are to capture it; but as yet we see small progress, for rank after rank the warriors of the Lord have marched to the breach and disappeared beneath the terrible fire of death. All who have gone before seem to have been utterly cut off and destroyed, and still the enemy holds his ramparts against us. Has nothing been done, think you? Has death taken away those martyrs, and confessors, and preachers, and laborious saints, and has nothing been achieved? Truly if Christ were dead I would admit our defeat,

for they that are fallen asleep in him would have perished: but as the Christ liveth so the cause liveth, and they that have fallen are not dead: they have vanished from our sight for a little, but if the curtain could be withdrawn every one of them would be seen to stand in his lot unharmed, crowned, victorious! "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" These are they that were defeated! Whence, then, their crowns? These are they that were dishonoured! Whence then their white robes? These are they who clung to a cause which is overthrown. Whence then their long line of victors, for there is not a vanquished man among them all? Let the truth be spoken. Defeat is not the word for the cause of Jesus, the Prince of the house of David. We have always been victorious, brethren; we are victorious now. Follow your Master on your white horses, and be not afraid! I see him in the front with his blood-stained vesture around him, fresh from the wine-press where he has trodden down his foes. You have not to present atoning blood, but only to conquer after your Lord. Put on your white raiment and follow him on your white horses, conquering and to conquer. He is nearer than we think, and the end of all things may be before the next jibe shall have come forth from the mouth of the last new sceptic. Have confidence in the risen One, and live in the power of his resurrection.

"SUPPOSING HIM TO BE THE GARDENER."

"Supposing him to be the gardener."—JOHN XX. 15.

I WAS sitting about a fortnight ago in a very lovely garden, in the midst of all kinds of flowers which were blooming in delightful abundance all around. Screening myself from the heat of the sun under the overhanging boughs of an olive, I cast my eyes upon palms and bananas, roses and camellias, oranges and aloes, lavender and heliotrope. The garden was full of colour and beauty, perfume and fruitfulness. Surely the gardener, whoever he might be, who had framed, and fashioned, and kept in order that lovely spot, deserved great commendation. So I thought, and then it came to me to meditate upon the church of God as a garden, and to suppose the Lord Jesus to be the gardener, and then to think of what would most assuredly happen if it were so. "Supposing him to be the gardener," my mind conceived of a paradise where all sweet things flourish and all evil things are rooted up. If an ordinary worker had produced such beauty as I then saw and enjoyed on earth, what beauty and glory must surely be brought forth "supposing *him* to be the gardener"! You know the "him" to whom we refer, the ever-blessed Son of God, whom Mary Magdalene in our text mistook for the gardener. We will for once follow a saint in her mistaken track; and yet we shall find ourselves going in a right way. She was mistaken when she fell into "supposing him to be the gardener"; but if we are under his Spirit's teaching we shall not make a mistake if now we indulge ourselves in a quiet meditation upon

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our ever-blessed Lord, "supposing him to be the gardener."

It is not an unnatural supposition, surely; for if we may truly sing—

> "We are a garden walled around,
> Chosen and made peculiar ground,"

that enclosure needs a gardener. Are we not all the plants of his right hand planting? Do we not all need watering and tending by his constant and gracious care? He says, "I am the true vine: my Father is the husbandman," and that is one view of it; but we may also sing, "My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine"—that is to say, he acted as gardener to it. Thus has Isaiah taught us to sing a song of the Well-beloved touching his vineyard. We read of our Lord just now under these terms—"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice." To what purpose does he dwell in the vineyards but that he may see how the vines flourish and care for all the plants? The image, I say, is so far from being unnatural that it is most pregnant with suggestions and full of useful teaching. We are not going against the harmonies of nature when we are "supposing him to be the gardener."

Neither is the figure unscriptural; for in one of his own parables our Lord makes himself to be the dresser of the vineyard. We read just now that parable so full of warning. When the "certain man" came in and saw the fig tree that it brought forth no fruit, he said unto the dresser of his vineyard, "Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?" Who was it that intervened between that profitless tree and the axe but our great Intercessor and Interposer? He it is who continually comes forward with "Let it alone this year also till I shall dig about it and dung it." In this case he himself takes upon himself the character of the vine-dresser,

and we are not wrong in "supposing him to be the gardener."

If we would be supported by a type, our Lord takes the name of "the Second Adam," and the first Adam was a gardener. Moses tells us that the Lord God placed the man in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. Man in his best estate was not to live in this world in a paradise of indolent luxury, but in a garden of recompensed toil. Behold, the church is Christ's Eden, watered by the river of life, and so fertilized that all manner of fruits are brought forth unto God; and he, our second Adam, walks in this spiritual Eden to dress it and to keep it; and so by a type we see that we are right in "supposing him to be the gardener." Thus also Solomon thought of him when he described the royal Bridegroom as going down with his spouse to the garden when the flowers appeared on the earth and the fig tree had put forth her green figs; he went out with his beloved for the preservation of the gardens, saying, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes." Neither nature, nor Scripture, nor type, nor song forbids us to think of our adorable Lord Jesus as one that careth for the flowers and fruits of his church. We err not when we speak of him, "supposing him to be the gardener." And so I sat me still, and indulged the suggested line of thought, which I now repeat in your hearing, hoping that I may open many roads of meditation for your hearts also. I shall not attempt to think out such a subject thoroughly, but only to indicate in which direction you may look for a vein of precious ore.

I. "Supposing him to be the gardener," we have here THE KEY TO MANY WONDERS in the garden of his church.

The first wonder is *that there should be a church at all in the world;* that there should be a garden blooming in the midst of this sterile waste. Upon a hard and flinty rock the Lord has made the Eden of his church to grow. How came it to be here—an oasis of life in a desert of death? How came faith in the midst of unbelief, and

hope where all is servile fear, and love where hate abounds? "Ye are of God, little children, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Whence this being "of God" where all beside is fast shut up in the devil? How came there to be a people for God, separated, and sanctified, and consecrated, and ordained to bring forth fruit unto his name? Assuredly it could not have been so at all if the doing of it had been left to man. We understand its existence, "supposing him to be the gardener," but nothing else can account for it. He can cause the fir tree to flourish instead of the thorn, and the myrtle instead of the briar; but no one else can accomplish such a change. The garden in which I sat was made on the bare face of the rock, and almost all the earth of which its terraces were composed had been brought up there, from the shore below, by hard labour, and so upon the rock a soil had been created. It was not by its own nature that the garden was found in such a place; but by skill and labour it had been formed: even so the church of God has had to be constructed by the Lord Jesus, who is the author as well as the perfecter of his garden. Painfully, with wounded hands, has he built each terrace, and fashioned each bed, and planted each plant. All the flowers have had to be watered with his bloody sweat, and watched by his tearful eyes: the nail-prints in his hands, and the wound in his side are the tokens of what it cost him to make a new Paradise. He has given his life for the life of every plant that is in the garden, and not one of them had been there on any other theory than "supposing him to be the gardener."

Besides, there is another wonder. *How comes the church of God to flourish in such a clime?* This present evil world is very uncongenial to the growth of grace, and the church is not able by herself alone to resist the evil influences which surround her. The church contains within itself elements which tend to its own disorder and destruction if left alone: even as the garden has present in its soil all the germs of a tangled thicket of

weeds. The best church that ever Christ had on earth would within a few years apostatise from the truth if deserted by the Spirit of God. The world never helps the church; it is all in arms against it; there is nothing in the world's air or soil that can fertilise the church even to the least degree. How is it, then, that notwithstanding all this the church is a fair garden unto God, and there are sweet spices grown in its beds, and lovely flowers are gathered by the Divine hand from its borders? The continuance and prosperity of the church can only be accounted for by "supposing him to be the gardener." Almighty strength is put to the otherwise impossible work of sustaining a holy people among men; almighty wisdom exercises itself upon this otherwise insuperable difficulty. Hear ye the word of the Lord, and learn hence the reason for the growth of his church below. "I, the Lord, do keep it: I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." That is the reason for the existence of a spiritual people still in the midst of a godless and perverse generation. This is the reason for an election of grace in the midst of surrounding vice, and worldliness, and unbelief. "Supposing him to be the gardener," I can see why there should be fruitfulness, and beauty, and sweetness even in the centre of the wilderness of sin.

Another mystery is also cleared up by this supposition. The wonder is *that ever you and I should have been placed among the plants of the Lord.* Why are *we* allowed to grow in the garden of his grace? Why me, Lord? Why me? How is it that we have been kept there, and borne with in our barrenness, when he might long ago have said, "Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?" Who else would have borne with such waywardness as ours? Who could have manifested such infinite patience? Who could have tended us with such care, and when the care was so ill-rewarded who would have renewed it so long from day to day, and persisted in designs of boundless love? Who could have done more for his vineyard? who could or would have done so much? Any mere

man would have repented of his good intent, provoked by our ingratitude. None but God could have had patience with some of us! That we have not long ago been slipped off as fruitless branches of the vine; that we are left still upon the stem, in the hope that we may ultimately bring forth fruit, is a great marvel. I know not how it is that we have been spared, except upon this ground—"supposing him to be the gardener"; for Jesus is all gentleness and grace, so slow with his knife, so tardy with his axe, so hopeful if we do but show a bud or two, or, perchance, yield a little sour berry—so hopeful, I say, that these may be hopeful prognostics of something better by-and-by. Infinite patience! Immeasurable longsuffering! where are ye to be found save in the breast of the Well-beloved? Surely the hoe has spared many of us simply and only because he who is meek and lowly in heart is the gardener.

Dear friends, there is one mercy with regard to this church which I have often had to thank God for, namely, *that evils should have been shut out for so long a time.* During the period in which we have been together as pastor and people, and that is now some twenty-nine years, we have enjoyed uninterrupted prosperity, going from strength to strength in the work of the Lord. Alas! we have seen many other churches that were quite as hopeful as our own rent with strife, brought low by declension, or overthrown by heresy. I hope we have not been apt to judge their faults severely; but we must be thankful for our own deliverance from the evils which have afflicted them. I do not know how it is that we have been kept together in love, helped to abound in labour, and enabled to be firm in the faith. unless it be that special grace has watched over us. We are full of faults; we have nothing to boast of; and yet no church has been more divinely favoured; I wonder that the blessing should have lasted so long, and I cannot make it out except when I fall into "supposing *him* to be the gardener." I cannot trace our prosperity to the pastor, certainly; nor even to my beloved friends

the elders and deacons, nor even to the best of you with your fervent love and holy zeal. I think it must be that Jesus has been the gardener, and he has shut the gate when I am afraid I have left it open; and he has driven out the wild boar of the wood just when he had entered to root up the weaker plants. He must have been about at nights to keep off the prowling thieves, and he must have been here, too, in the noontide heat to guard those of you who have prospered in worldly goods, from the glare of too bright a sun. Yes, *he* has been with us, blessed be his name! Hence all this peace, and unity, and enthusiasm. May we never grieve him so that he shall turn away from us; but rather let us entreat him, saying, "Abide with us. Thou that dwellest in the gardens, let this be one of the gardens in which thou dost deign to dwell until the day break and the shadows flee away." Thus our supposition is a key to many wonders.

II. Let your imaginations run along with mine while I say that "supposing him to be the gardener" should be A SPUR TO MANY DUTIES.

One of the duties of a Christian is *joy*. That is a blessed religion which among its precepts commands men to be happy. When joy becomes a duty, who would wish to neglect it? Surely it must help every little plant to drink in the sunlight when it is whispered among the flowers that Jesus is the gardener. "Oh," you say, "I am such a little plant; I do not grow well; I do not put forth so much leafage, nor are there so many flowers on me as on many round about me!" It is quite right that you should think little of yourself: perhaps to droop your head is a part of your beauty: many flowers had not been half so lovely if they had not practised the art of hanging their heads. But "supposing him to be the gardener," then he is as much a gardener to you as he is to the most lordly palm in the whole domain. In the Mentone garden right before me grew the orange and the aloe, and others of the finer and more noticeable plants; but on a wall to my left

grew common wallflowers and saxifrages, and tiny herbs such as we find on our own rocky places. Now, the gardener had cared for all of these, little as well as great; in fact, there were hundreds of specimens of the most insignificant growths all duly labelled and described. The smallest saxifrage could say, "He is my gardener just as surely as he is the gardener of the Gloire de Dijon or Maréchal Neil." Oh feeble child of God, the Lord taketh care of you! Your heavenly Father feedeth ravens, and guides the flight of sparrows: should he not much more care for you, oh ye of little faith? Oh little plants, you will grow rightly enough. Perhaps you are growing downward just now rather than upward. Remember that there are plants of which we value the underground root much more than we do the haulm above ground. Perhaps it is not yours to grow very fast; you may be a slow-growing shrub by nature, and you would not be healthy if you were to run to wood. Anyhow, be this your joy, you are in the garden of the Lord, and, "supposing him to be the gardener," he will make the best of you. You cannot be in better hands.

Another duty is that of *valuing the Lord's presence, and praying for it.* We ought whenever the Sabbath morning dawns to pray our Well-beloved to come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits. What can we do without him? All day long our cry should go up to him, "O Lord, behold and visit this vine, and the vineyard which thy right hand has planted." We ought to agonize with him that he would come and manifest himself to us as he does not unto the world. For what is a garden if the gardener never comes near it? What is the difference between it and the wilderness if he to whom it belongs never lifts up spade or pruning-hook upon it? So that it is our necessity that we have Christ with us, "supposing him to be the gardener;" and it is our bliss that we have Christ walking between our beds and borders, watching every plant, training, tending, maturing all. "Supposing him to be the

gardener," it is well, for from him is our fruit found. Divided from him we are nothing; only as he watches over us can we bring forth fruit. Let us have done with confidence in man, let us forego all attempts to supply facts of his spiritual presence by routine or rant, ritualism or rowdyism; but let us pray our Lord to be ever present with us, and by that presence to make our garden grow.

"Supposing him to be the gardener," there is another duty, and that is, let each one of us *yield himself up entirely to him.* A plant does not know how it ought to be treated; it knows not when it should be watered or when it should be kept dry: a fruit-tree is no judge of when it needs to be pruned, or digged, or dunged. The wit and wisdom of the garden lieth not in the flowers and shrubs, but in the gardener. Now, then, if you and I are here to-day with any self-will and carnal judgment about us, let us seek to lay it all aside that we may be absolutely at our Lord's disposal. You might not be willing to put yourself implicitly into the hand of any mere man (pity that you should); but, surely, thou plant of the Lord's right-hand planting, thou mayest put thyself without a question into his dear hand. "Supposing him to be the gardener," thou mayest well say, "I would neither have will, nor wish, nor wit, nor whim, nor way, but I would be as nothing in the gardener's hands, that he may be to me my wisdom and my all. Here, kind gardener, thy poor plant bows itself to thy hand; train me as thou wilt. Depend upon it, happiness lives next door to the spirit of complete acquiescence in the will of God, and it will be easy to exercise that perfect acquiescence when we suppose the Lord Jesus to be the gardener. If the Lord hath done it, what has a saint to say? Oh thou afflicted one, the Lord hath done it: wouldest thou have it otherwise? Nay, art thou not thankful that it is even so, because so is the will of him in whose hand thy life is, and whose are all thy ways? The duty of submission is very plain, "supposing him to be the gardener."

One more duty I would mention, though others suggest

themselves. "Supposing him to be the gardener," then *let us bring forth fruit to him.* I do not address a people this morning who feel no care as to whether they serve God or not. I believe that most of you do desire to glorify God; for being saved by grace, you feel a holy ambition to show forth his praises who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. You wish to bring others to Christ, because you yourselves have been brought to life and liberty in him. Now, let this be a stimulus to your fruit-bearing, that Jesus is the gardener. Where you have brought forth a single cluster, bring forth a hundred, "supposing him to be the gardener." If he is to have the honour of it, then labour to do that which will give him great renown. If our spiritual state were to be attributed to ourselves, or to our minister, or to some of our fellow Christians, we might not feel that we were under a great necessity to be fruitful; but if Jesus be the gardener, and is to bear the blame or the honour of what we produce, then let us use up every drop of sap and strain every fibre, that, to the utmost of which our manhood is capable, we may produce a fair reward for our Lord's travail. Under such tutorship and care we ought to become eminent scholars. Doth Christ train us? Oh, let us never cause the world to think meanly of our Master. Students feel that their *alma mater* deserves great things of them, so they labour to make their university renowned. And so, since Jesus is tutor and university to us, let us feel that we are bound to reflect credit upon so great a teacher, upon so divine a name. I do not know how to put it, but surely we ought to do something worthy of such a Lord. Each little flower in the garden of the Lord should wear its brightest hues, and pour forth its rarest perfume, because Jesus cares for it. The best of all possible good should be yielded by every plant in our Father's garden, supposing Jesus to be the gardener.

Thus much, then, on those two points—a key to many wonders, and a spur to many duties.

III. Thirdly, I have found in this supposition A RELIEF

"SUPPOSING HIM TO BE THE GARDENER."

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I WAS sitting about a fortnight ago in a very lovely garden, in the midst of all kinds of flowers which were blooming in delightful abundance all around. Screening myself from the heat of the sun under the overhanging boughs of an olive, I cast my eyes upon palms and bananas, roses and camellias, oranges and aloes, lavender and heliotrope. The garden was full of colour and beauty, perfume and fruitfulness. Surely the gardener, whoever he might be, who had framed, and fashioned, and kept in order that lovely spot, deserved great commendation. So I thought, and then it came to me to meditate upon the church of God as a garden, and to suppose the Lord Jesus to be the gardener, and then to think of what would most assuredly happen if it were so. "Supposing him to be the gardener," my mind conceived of a paradise where all sweet things flourish and all evil things are rooted up. If an ordinary worker had produced such beauty as I then saw and enjoyed on earth, what beauty and glory must surely be brought forth "supposing *him* to be the gardener"! You know the "him" to whom we refer, the ever-blessed Son of God, whom Mary Magdalene in our text mistook for the gardener. We will for once follow a saint in her mistaken track; and yet we shall find ourselves going in a right way. She was mistaken when she fell into "supposing him to be the gardener"; but if we are under his Spirit's teaching we shall not make a mistake if now we indulge ourselves in a quiet meditation upon

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self. Just think that the Lord is the gardener. I know it is so in matters of providence. A certain man of God in troublous times became quite unable to do his duty because he laid to heart so much the ills of the age; he became depressed and disturbed, and he went on board a vessel, wanting to leave the country, which was getting into such a state that he could no longer endure it. Then one said to him, "Mr. Whitelock, are you the manager of the world?" No, he was not quite that. "Did not God get on pretty well with it before you were born, and don't you think he will do very well with it when you are dead?" That reflection helped to relieve the good man's mind, and he went back to do his duty. I want you thus to perceive the limit of your responsibility: you are not the gardener himself; you are only one of the gardener's boys, set to run on errands, or to do a bit of digging, or to sweep the paths. The garden is well enough managed even though you are not head manager in it.

While this relieves us of anxiety it makes labour for Christ very sweet, because if the garden does not seem to repay us for our trouble we say to ourselves, "It is not my garden after all. 'Supposing him to be the gardener,' I am quite willing to work on a barren piece of rock, or tie up an old withered bough, or dig a worthless sod; for, if it only pleases Jesus, the work is for that one sole reason profitable to the last degree. It is not mine to question the wisdom of my task, but to set about it in the name of my Master and Lord. 'Supposing him to be the gardener,' lifts the ponderous responsibility of it from me, and my work becomes pleasant and delightful."

In dealing with the souls of men, we meet with cases which are extremely difficult. Some persons are so timid and fearful that you do not know how to comfort them; others are so fast and presumptuous that you hardly know how to help them. A few are so double-faced that you cannot understand them, and others so fickle that you cannot hold them. Some flowers puzzle

the ordinary gardener: we meet with plants which are covered with prickles, and when you try to train them they wound the hand that would help them. These strange growths would make a great muddle for you if you were the gardener; but "supposing him to be the gardener," you have the happiness of being able to go to him constantly saying, "Good Lord, I do not understand this singular creature; it is as odd a plant as I am myself. Oh, that thou wouldest manage it, or tell me how. I have come to tell thee of it."

Constantly our trouble is that we have so many plants to look after that we have not time to cultivate any one in the best manner, because we have fifty more all wanting attention at the time; and then before we have done with the watering-pot we have to fetch the hoe and the rake and the spade, and we are puzzled with these multitudinous cares, even as Paul was when he said, "That which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Ah, then, it is a blessed thing to do the little we can do and leave the rest to Jesus, "supposing him to be the gardener."

In the church of God there is a discipline which we cannot exercise. I do not think it is half so hard to exercise discipline as it is not to be able to exercise it when yet you feel that it ought to be done. The servants of the householder were perplexed when they might not root up the tares. "Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares?" "An enemy hath done this." "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" "Not so," said he, "lest ye root up the wheat with them." This afflicts the Christian minister when he must not remove a pestilent, hindering weed. Yes, but "supposing *him* to be the gardener," and it is his will to let that weed remain, what have you and I to do but to hold our peace? He has a discipline more sure and safe than ours, and in due time the tares shall know it. In patience let us possess our souls.

And then, again, there is that succession in the garden which we cannot keep up. Plants will die down, and

others must be put into their places or the garden will grow bare; but we know not where to find these fresh flowers. We say, "when yonder good man dies who will succeed him?" That is a question I have heard many a time, till I am rather weary of it. Who is to follow such a man? Let us wait till he is gone and needs following. Why sell the man's coat when he can wear it himself? We are apt to think when this race of good brethren shall die out that none will arise worthy to unloose the latchets of their shoes. Well, friend, I could suppose a great many things, but this morning my text is, "Supposing him to be the gardener," and on that supposition I expect that the Lord has other plants in reserve which you have not yet seen, and these will exactly fit into our places when they become empty, and the Lord will keep up the true apostolical succession till the day of his second advent. In every time of darkness and dismay, when the heart sinks and the spirits decline, and we think it is all over with the church of God, let us fall back on this, "Supposing him to be the gardener," and expect to see greater and better things than these. We are at the end of *our* wits, but he is not at the beginning of his yet: we are nonplussed, but he never will be; therefore let us wait and be tranquil, "supposing him to be the gardener."

IV. Fourthly, I want you to notice that this supposition will give you A DELIVERANCE FROM MANY GLOOMY FEARS. I walked down the garden, and I saw a place where all the path was strewn with leaves and broken branches, and stones, and I saw the earth upon the flower-beds tossed about, and roots lying quite out of the ground: all was in disorder. Had a dog been amusing himself? or had a mischievous child been at work? If so, it was a great pity. But no: in a minute or two I saw the gardener come back, and I perceived that *he* had been making all this disarrangement. He had been cutting, and digging, and hacking, and mess-making; and all for the good of the garden. It may be it has happened to some of you that you have been a good

deal clipped lately, and in your domestic affairs things have not been in so fair a state as you could have wished: it may be in the Church we have seen ill weeds plucked up, and barren branches lopped, so that everything is *en deshabille*. Well, if the Lord has done it our gloomy fears are idle. "Supposing him to be the gardener," all is well.

As I was talking this over with my friend, I said to him—"Supposing him to be the gardener," then *the serpent* will have a bad time of it. Supposing Adam to be the gardener, then the serpent gets in and has a chat with his wife, and mischief comes of it; but supposing Jesus to be the gardener, woe to thee, serpent: there is a blow for thy head within half a minute if thou dost but show thyself within the boundary. So, if we are afraid that the devil should get in among us let us always in prayer entreat that there may be no space for the devil, because the Lord Jesus Christ fills all, and keeps out the adversary. Other creatures besides serpents intrude into gardens; caterpillars and palmerworms, and all sorts of destroying creatures are apt to devour our churches. How can we keep them out? The highest wall cannot exclude them: there is no protection except one, and that is, "supposing him to be the gardener." Thus it is written, "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts."

I am sometimes troubled by the question, What if roots of bitterness should spring up among us to trouble us? We are all such fallible creatures, supposing some brother should permit the seed of discord to grow in his bosom, then there may be a sister in whose heart the seeds will also spring up, and from her they will fly to another sister, and be blown about till brethren and sisters are all bearing rue and wormwood in their hearts. Who is to prevent this? Only the Lord Jesus by his Spirit. He can keep out this evil, "supposing

him to be the gardener." The root which beareth wormwood will grow but little where Jesus is. Dwell with us, Lord, as a church and people: by thy Holy Spirit reside with us and in us, and never depart from us, and then no root of bitterness shall spring up to trouble us.

Then comes another fear. Suppose the living waters of God's Spirit should not come to water the garden, what then? We cannot make them flow, for the Spirit is a sovereign, and he flows where he pleases. Ah, but the Spirit of God will be in our garden, "supposing our Lord to be the gardener." There is no fear of our not being watered when Jesus undertakes to do it. "He will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." But what if the sunlight of his love should not shine on the garden? If the fruits should never ripen, if there should be no peace, no joy in the Lord? That cannot happen "supposing him to be the gardener;" for his face is the sun, and his countenance scatters those health-giving beams, and nurturing warmths, and perfecting influences which are needful for maturing the saints in all the sweetness of grace to the glory of God. So, "supposing him to be the gardener" at this the close of the year, I fling away my doubts and fears, and invite you who bear the church upon your heart to do the same. It is all well with Christ's cause because it is in his own hands. He shall not fail nor be discouraged. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands.

V. Fifthly, here is A WARNING FOR THE CARELESS, "supposing him to be the gardener." In this great congregation many are to the church what weeds are to a garden. They are not planted by God; they are not growing under his nurture, they are bringing forth no fruit to his glory. My dear friend, I have tried often to get at you, to impress you, but I cannot. Take heed; for one of these days, "supposing him to be the gardener," he will reach you, and you shall know what that word meaneth, "Every plant which my heavenly

Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." Take heed to yourselves, I pray.

Others among us are like the branches of the vine which bear no fruit. We have often spoken very sharply to these, speaking honest truth in unmistakable language, and yet we have not touched their consciences. Ah, but "supposing him to be the gardener," he will fulfil that sentence: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." He will get at you, if *we* cannot. Would God, ere this old year were quite dead, you would turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart; so that instead of being a weed you might become a choice flower; that instead of a dry stick, you might be a sappy, fruit-bearing branch of the vine. The Lord make it to be so; but if any here need the caution, I pray them to take it to heart at once. "Supposing him to be the gardener," there will be no escaping from his eye; there will be no deliverance from his hand. As "he will throughly purge his floor, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire," so he will throughly cleanse his garden and cast out every worthless thing.

VI. Another set of thoughts may well arise as A QUIETUS TO THOSE WHO COMPLAIN, "supposing him to be the gardener." Certain of us have been made to suffer much physical pain, which often bites into the spirits, and makes the heart to stoop: others have suffered heavy temporal losses, having had no success in business, but, on the contrary, having had to endure privation, perhaps even to penury. Are you ready to complain against the Lord for all this? I pray you, do not so. Take the supposition of the text into your mind this morning. The Lord has been pruning you sharply, cutting off your best boughs, and you seem to be like a thing despised, that is constantly tormented with the knife. Yes, but "supposing him to be the gardener," suppose that your loving Lord has wrought it all, that from his own hand all your grief has come, every cut, and every gash, and every slip: does not this alter the case? Hath not the Lord done it? Well, then, if it

be so, put your finger to your lip and be quiet, until you are able from your heart to say, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." I am persuaded that the Lord hath done nothing amiss to any one of his people; that no child of his can rightly complain that he has been whipped with too much severity; and that no one branch of the vine can truthfully declare that it has been pruned with too sharp an edge. No; what the Lord has done is the best that could have been done, the very thing that you and I, if we could have possessed infinite wisdom and love, would have wished to have done; therefore let us stop each thought of murmuring, and say, "The Lord hath done it," and be glad.

Especially I speak to those who have suffered bereavement. I can hardly express to you how strange I feel at this moment when my sermon revives a memory so sweet dashed with such exceeding bitterness. I sat with my friend and secretary in that garden some fifteen days ago, and we were then in perfect health, rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord. We returned home, and within five days I was smitten with disabling pain; and worse, far worse than that, he was called upon to lose his wife. We said to one another as we sat there reading the word of God and meditating, "How happy we are! Dare we think of being so happy? Must it not speedily end?" I little thought I should have to say for him, "Alas, my brother, thou art brought very low, for the delight of thine eyes is taken from thee." But here is our comfort: the Lord hath done it. The best rose in the garden is gone. Who has taken it? The gardener came this way and gathered it. He planted it and watched over it, and now he has taken it. Is not this most natural? Does anybody weep because of that? No; everybody knows that it is right, and according to the order of nature, that he should come and gather the best in the garden. If you are sore troubled by the loss of your beloved, yet dry your grief by "supposing him to be the gardener." Kiss the hand

that has wrought you such grief? Brethren beloved, remember the next time the Lord comes to your part of the garden, and he may do so within the next week, he will only gather his own flowers, and would you prevent his doing so even if you could?

VII. "Supposing him to be the gardener," then there is AN OUTLOOK FOR THE HOPEFUL. "Supposing him to be the gardener," then I expect to see in the garden where he works the best possible prosperity: I expect to see no flower dried up, no tree without fruit: I expect to see the richest, rarest fruit, with the daintiest bloom upon it, daily presented to the great Owner of the garden. Let us expect that in this church, and pray for it. Oh, if we have but faith we shall see great things. It is our unbelief that straitens God. Let us believe great things from the work of Christ by his Spirit in the midst of his people's hearts, and we shall not be disappointed.

"Supposing him to be the gardener," then, dear friends, we may expect divine intercourse of unspeakable preciousness. Go back to Eden for a minute. When Adam was the gardener, what happened? The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day. But "supposing HIM to be the gardener," then we shall have the Lord God dwelling among us, and revealing himself in all the glory of his power, and the plenitude of his Fatherly heart; making us to know him, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God. What joy is this!

One other thought. "Supposing him to be the gardener," and God to come and walk among the trees of the garden, then I expect he will remove the whole of the garden upward with himself to fairer skies; for he rose, and his people must rise with him. I expect a blessed transplantation of all these flowers below to a clearer atmosphere above, away from all this smoke and fog and damp, up where the sun is never clouded, where flowers never wither, where fruits never decay. Oh, the glory we shall then enjoy up yonder, on the hills of spices in the garden of God. "Supposing him to

be the gardener," what a garden will he form above, and how shall you and I grow therein, developing beyond imagination. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Since he is the author and finisher of our faith, to what perfection will he conduct us, and to what glory will he bring us! Oh, to be found in him! God grant we may be! To be plants in his garden, "supposing him to be the gardener," is all the heaven we can desire.

WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?

"For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."—JAMES iv. 14.

WHEN a prince dies they toll the great bell of the cathedral that all the city may hear it, and that for miles round the tidings may spread. Swift messengers of the press bear the news through the length and breadth of the land, and all men's ears are made to tingle. A *royal* death is a national warning. A death in any one of our families is a loud call to our own household, a call which I trust we hear; but a death in the royal family has a voice to the whole nation. It will be heard, it must be heard. In this great city the crowds who care not to come to the house of God, will nevertheless hear of this lamented death, and think of it, and speak of it each man to his fellow. Death is an orator whose solemn periods demand attention, especially when he preaches from the steps of the throne. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city," let believers be quick to hear the call to humiliation, to awakening, and to prayer that the visitation may be overruled for great and lasting good.

A *sudden* death is a specially impressive warning. If men die of old age we regard it as coming in the common course of things; but when a young man is suddenly snatched away, then we understand that though the old must die, the young may die; and that no one among us may reckon upon any long day of life, since in a moment our sun may go down ere it is yet noon. So falls the grass beneath the mower's scythe,

A sermon suggested by the sudden death of H.R.H. the Duke of Albany. Delivered on Sunday morning, March 30, 1884, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

so fades the leaf from the tree. In a moment our strength is turned to weakness, and our comeliness into corruption. Then, in accents as plain as they are terrible, the Lord saith, "Because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!"

We have this week received fresh proof that death is impartial. As the Arab proverb hath it, the black camel stops at every man's door. Sorrow has entered in at the windows of palaces, and even in the royal chamber there lieth one dead. If, therefore, death be so impartial that he smites down the captains, let not the rank and file hope to escape. Death, which forces entrance to a prince's bedchamber, will not respect our cottage door. To us also in due time shall be brought the message, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." My ear hears a voice crying aloud, "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." Will not you hear it? Will any one of you refuse the voice which speaketh from heaven? Death evidently pays no respect to character, age, or hopefulness. A man may addict himself to the service of his country, but his patriotism will not protect him. He may be surrounded with a wall of affection, but this will not screen him. He may have at command all the comforts of life, and yet life may ooze out before the physician is aware. He may be tenderly beloved of an affectionate mother, and his name may be engraven on the heart of the fondest of wives, but death hath no regard to the love of women. "It is appointed unto men once to die." There is no discharge in this war: we shall all march into this fight, and unless the Lord himself shall speedily come and end the present dispensation, we shall each one fall upon this battle-field, for the shafts of death fly everywhere, and there is no armour for either back or breast by which his cruel darts may be turned aside. I would to God that all of us retained this truth in our memories. "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am." We have a very clear conviction that others will die,

but as to ourselves, we put far from us the evil day, and care not to dwell upon a subject which smells so unpleasantly of the charnel-house. Yes, we admit that we shall die, but not so soon as to make it a pressing matter; we imagine that we are not within measurable distance of the tomb. Even the oldest man gives himself a little longer lease, and when he has passed his fourscore years we have seen him hugging life with as much tenacity as if he had just commenced it. Brethren, in this we are not wise; but death will not spare us because we avoid him. What is there about any one of us that we should fare better than the rest of our fellow-men? We are in the same army, marching upon the same field: how shall we escape where all others fall? Two only of our race have gone into the better land without crossing the dark river of death—Enoch and Elijah; but no one among us will make a third.

Now, upon this matter we have nothing to say but what is commonplace, for, garnish them as you may, graves are among the commonest of common things. Yet a solemn reflection upon the shortness of life, and the certainty of death, may prove to be important, and even invaluable, if it be allowed to penetrate our hearts, and influence our lives. History tells us of Peter Waldo, of Lyons, who was sitting at a banquet as thoughtless and careless as any of the revellers, when suddenly one at the table bowed his head and died. Waldo was startled into thought, and went home to seek his God; he searched the Scriptures, and, according to some, became a great helper, if not the second founder, of the Waldensian church, which in the Alpine valleys kept the lamp of the gospel burning when all around was veiled in night. A whole church of God was thus strengthened and perpetuated by the hallowed influence of death upon a single mind. I suppose it is also true that Luther in his younger days, walking with his friend Alexis, saw him struck to the ground by a flash of lightning, and became thenceforward prepared in heart for that deep work of grace through which he learned the doc-

trine of justification by faith, and rose to be the liberator of Europe from Papal bondage. How much every way we owe to this weighty subject! Among the earnest, the prayerful, the holy, many must own that the vaults of death have brought them spiritual health. Men have been helped to live by remembering that they must die: yea, some men knew nothing of the highest form of life till death aroused them from their deadly slumbers. I hope that God's Spirit may this morning impress many of you with these reflections, and lead you to the cross of Christ by the way of this *memento mori*. May a prince's death awaken many of you to life. He being dead now speaks to you; from yonder sunny shores he reminds you of the valley of death-shade which you must shortly traverse.

With an intense desire for our spiritual profiting I shall speak upon our text in two ways; first, let us consider *the truth in the text*, and, secondly, *the lessons in that truth*.

I. We commence with THE TRUTH IN THE TEXT, upon which we have already touched. The text begins by reminding us that we have no foresight: "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow." God has given us memory that we may look backward, and it were well if we used our memories better for remembrance, reflection, and repentance, but God has given us no eyes wherewith to pry into the future. He unveils the past to our penitence; but he veils the future from our curiosity. Dark days may be near at hand for some of us, but we do not perceive them. Let us be thankful that we do not, for we might multiply our afflictions by the foresight of them, and the prospect of evil to come might cast a gloom over pleasure near at hand. As we may feel a thousand deaths in fearing one, so may we faint under a thousand lashes in dreading a single stroke. It is good also that our God conceals from us our earthly joys until the time for their arrival. Great prosperity may await you, and a considerable enlargement of your temporal comfort, but you do not know

it; and it is as well that you should not, for you might be none the better for the prospect. Earth's goods are like bird-lime, and are fearfully apt to glue us down to things below, and prevent our soaring towards heaven. If then we could know all the pleasurable events that may happen to us we might become more worldly and more earthbound than we are. None of us could desire that this present evil world should have an increased influence over us: we are glad that it should have less, and therefore we rejoice that its future has such slight power over us because of its being unknown.

No, we cannot see far, and those who act as if they could see into coming days behave most foolishly. Hear these people whom James describes; they boast most wretchedly: they will go into the city, they are sure they will, what is to hinder them? "To-day or to-morrow, we will go into such a city,"—they have plenty of time, and can make a selection according to their pleasure: they can go where they like, and when they like. They see themselves with prophetic glance entering in at the city gate, and they are fully assured that they shall "continue there year." Of course, a year that is a small matter: if they please they will stay longer. They allot themselves a lease for three, seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years, at discretion; at least they talk as if they could do so. They are going into the city to "buy and sell:" they are sure of that too. Of course they will not be laid up with sickness; they do not fear that accident or disease will keep them away from market, or hinder the active transacting of their business. No, they are going to buy and sell, and such is their confidence in their own superior abilities that they are sure to make a profit of it: the markets cannot fall below the price which they have fixed in their own minds, neither will they make bad debts, nor incur other losses, for they have decided that they will "get gain." Hitherto they have been self-made men, and they mean to go on making themselves, until they put the finishing stroke by adding a few more thousands.

They have visions of going on to fortune. Ah, ye prophets, ye are going to your graves! This is a sure oracle. The tomb will be your only patrimony, and the shroud your sole possession. Let none of us talk of what we resolve to do at some future date. Look well to the present, for that is all the time we can be sure of, and there may be little enough of that. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Thus said the wise man; let wise men take heed to his counsel.

The apostle emphasizes the folly of this supposed foresight by telling us that we cannot even reckon upon another day. You have come close up to the end of March, but if you reckon upon what you will do upon the first of April, you may find by the event that you are a fool. You may get to the last day of the year; but if you reckon on a new year, you may be giving new proof of your unwisdom. Even in the morning we cannot make sure of the eventide, nor in the evening can we reckon upon the morning. James puts the matter strongly when he asks: "What is your life?" You do not know what is going to happen on the morrow, for you do not know your own life. What is it?

The text divides itself into an emphatic question, "What is your life?" and an instructive answer: "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

First, I say, we have here *an emphatic question:* he asks, "What is your life?" For solidity, for stability; what is it? What is there in it? Is it not composed of such stuff as dreams are made of? The breath in your nostrils is not more unsubstantial than is your life. There, breathe it out! On such a morning as this you see your breath; but it is only in your sight for a moment, and then it vanishes away. Your own breath is a fair picture of the flimsy, airy thing which men call life. What is your life? What is it for continuance? Some things last awhile, and run adown the

centuries; but what is your life? Even garments bear some little wear and tear; but what is your life? A delicate texture; no cobweb is a tithe as frail. It will fail before a touch, a breath. Justinian, an emperor of Rome, died by going into a room which had been newly painted; Adrian, a pope, was strangled by a fly; a consul struck his foot against his own threshold, and his foot mortified, so that he died thereby. There are a thousand gates to death; and, though some seem to be narrow wickets, many souls have passed through them. Men have been choked by a grape stone, killed by a tile falling from the roof of a house, poisoned by a drop, carried off by a whiff of foul air. I know not what there is that is too little to slay the greatest king. It is a marvel that man lives at all. So unstable is our life that the apostle says, What is it? So frail, so fragile is it, that he does not call it a flower of the field, or the snuff of a candle, but asks, What is our life? It is as if he had said—Is it anything? Is it not a near approach to nothing?

Have you ever noticed how David answers this question in the thirty-ninth Psalm? He says in the fifth verse of that psalm that *man is vanity*. What is vanity? It is nothing in reality, it is merely the pretence of something; it is an idle dream, an empty conceit, a delusion, a make-believe. Such is man. But he says more than that: he declares that *every man* is vanity. Princes, kings, philosophers, the strongest, the healthiest, the ablest, the most virtuous—every man is vanity: among the millions of mankind none rises above this dreary state of nothingness. He says more than that: he writes—*every man at his best state is vanity:* when he is in the prime and glory of his life, when he is most healthy and vigorous, when his eye is clearest, and his muscles are firmest, he is still no better than sheer vanity. David goes even further, for thus he speaks—"*Every man at his best state is altogether vanity;*" that is, he is nothing but vanity, there is nothing more enduring about him. He is gone with a puff; he spends

his years as a tale that is told. Do not overlook one more emphatic word which David sets in the forefront of the sentence, "*Verily*," as if he was quite sure of it, and could not tolerate a question upon the subject—"*Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.*"

Have you ever observed how Job, when he speaks of our life, sets us a sign in each of the three elements whereon and wherein we dwell? See his ninth chapter, at the twenty-fifth verse. He says, "My days are swifter than a post:" here is an emblem upon the land. Oriental kings employed swift-footed runners and horses and dromedaries, and these to the Oriental imagination were the very *beau ideal* of speed: even we, before the days of electricity, knew of nothing faster than the royal mail. Job therefore well says, "My days are swifter than a post." Then he bids us look to sea, for he says, "They are passed away as the swift ships;" ships which are built for speed seem to fly as on wings when they spread their sails to a favouring wind. We ought not to view ships at sea without remembering the brevity of our days. But lest we should still forget, the patriarch further likens his days to "the eagle that hasteth to the prey." As the vulture spies from a distance the carcase of a camel, and descends upon it with hasty sweep, so our life hastes to descend. Thus earth, sea, and air all remind us of the speed at which life flies towards its end.

St. Augustine used to say he did not know whether to call it a dying life or a living death, and I leave you the choice between those two expressions. This is certainly a dying life; its march is marked by graves. Nothing but a continuous miracle keeps any one of us from the sepulchre. Were omnipotence to stay its power but for a moment, earth would return to earth, and ashes to ashes. It is a dying life: and equally true is it that it is a living death. We are always dying. Every beating pulse we tell leaves but the number less: the more years we count in our life, the fewer remain in which we shall behold the light of day. While we are sitting still in this house, the earth is revolving round the

sun, and bearing us all through space at an amazing rate. We are all moving, and yet we do not perceive it; even so while you are listening to this sermon you are all being borne onward towards eternity at lightning speed. As though we were laid in the bosom of some mighty angel, and he with outstretched wings darted along like a flame of fire, we are ever urging our onward way. Though we dream that we are at a stay, yet we never rest for an instant. The stream is bearing us onward: we are nearing the cataract. Ever must we obey the mandate—"Onward, onward, onward." From childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to grey old age we march onward in serried ranks from which no man can retire. We tarry not even when we sleep; we are continually moving forward like the waters of yonder river, on whose banks we find a habitation. What, then, is our life? That is a question which remains to a large degree unanswered and unanswerable.

Yet our text affords us what is in some aspects *an instructive answer*. It does not so much tell us what life actually is as what it is like. "*It is even a vapour.*" James compares our life, you see, to a very subtle, unsubstantial, flimsy thing—a vapour. If you live upon an eminence, from which you can look down upon a stretch of country, you see in the early morning a mist covering all the valleys. It is singular to mark the tops of the great elms appearing above it, like islands in a sea of cloud, with perhaps here and there a church spire rising like a sharp pyramid from the waste of mist. In a little time you look from the same window, and the vapour has all vanished. It was so thin, so fine, so much like gossamer, that a breath of wind has scattered it, or peradventure the sun has drawn it aloft; at any rate, not a trace of that all-encompassing vapour remains. Such is your life. Or you have marked a cloud in the western sky, illuminated with those marvellous lights which glowed during those extraordinary sunsets, the like of which none of our fathers had seen. You looked

at the jewelled mass; it shone in the perfection of beauty, and all the colours of the rainbow were blended in its hues: in another instant, lo, it was not; it was gone past all recall. Such is your life. This morning, as we came hither, we saw our breath: it was before our eye for an instant, and anon it had gone. Such is the picture which James presents to us. "What is your life? It is even a vapour."

He proceeds to explain his own symbol in a sentence which is full of meaning. "It is even a vapour, *that appeareth.*" Notice that. He does not speak of it as a substance, having a true existence, but says that it "*appeareth.*" Vapour is so ethereal, phantom-like, and unreal, that it may rather be said to appear than to exist. If you could reach yon fleecy cloud, you would scarcely know that you had entered it, for it would possibly appear to be the thinnest of mist. The vapour which steams from your mouth, how light, how airy, it is next door to nothing; it only "appeareth." And such is this life—a dream, a vain show, an apparition of the night. Half our joys and sorrows are but the pretence of joy and the shadow of sorrow; and the most of things through which we travel are not what they seem. We ought to know this in a practical way, and set less store by the things which are seen, which are temporal. This life "appeareth"—that is all.

Further the apostle says, "It appeareth *for a little time.*" It is only a very little while that a man lives at the longest. Compare a man's life with that of a tree. There is so striking a contrast between our present short life and that of a cedar, or an oak, that to set forth the longer life of saints in the millennial age the Lord says, "As the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." In that happy age men shall flourish long as the trees of the forest; but now a man standing beneath an oak is a mere infant compared with the boughs which overshadow him. A hundred years ago that oak seemed every way as venerable as it does to-day, whereas

the man was then unthought of by his grandsire. Compare our life with the existence of this world; I mean not the present state of the earth as fitted up for man, but I allude to those unknown ages which intervened between the present arrangement and that beginning wherein God created the heavens and the earth. The long eras of fire and water, the reigns of fishes and reptiles, the periods of tropical heat and polar ice, make one think of man as a thing of yesterday. Then contrast our life with the being of the eternal Lord: and what is man—man when most venerable with years? A Methuselah, what is he? He is but an insect born in the morning's sunbeam, sporting in the noontide ray, and dead when the dews begin to fall. He appeareth for a little while.

The parallel is further consummated by the apostle's adding, "*And then vanisheth away.*" The cloud is gone from the mountain. Where is it? It has vanished away. No trace of it is left: neither can you recall it. We too shall soon be gone; gone as a dream when one awaketh. With the most of us our remembrance will be short. Many leave us concerning whom it would be a pity that they should be remembered; while many fail to live for others, and therefore their fellows speedily forget them. Amid the crowded cemetery a single grave is lost; amid ten thousand deaths no one departure can long abide in human memory. As far as this world is concerned we all shall by-and-by vanish away. Then shall our near companion say of us,

> "One morn I missed him on the accustomed hill,
> Along the heath, and near his favourite tree;
> Another came, nor yet beside the rill,
> Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he."

The air has felt the passing-bell, and now the stars look down upon a stone writ large with "HERE HE LIES!" Or the dews shall wet a grass-grown mound, girt about with brambles, on which a few wild flowers have sprung up spontaneously to show how life shall yet triumph

over death. Children may bear our name, and yet a fourth generation shall quite forget that we ever sojourned in this region. Such is our life—"a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." This is the truth; you know it, but I cannot impress it upon your hearts as it ought to be impressed; hence I invite you to join me in the prayer, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

II. Secondly, let us now learn THE LESSONS WHICH LIE WITHIN THIS TRUTH. May we read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the same.

First, If this life be unsubstantial as a vapour,—and nobody can deny the fact,—let us regard it as such, and let us seek for something substantial elsewhere.

> "This world's a dream, an empty show;
> But the great world to which I go
> Hath joys substantial and sincere:
> When shall I wake and find me there?"

It may be well to make the best of both worlds; but of this poor world nothing can be made unless it be viewed in the light of another. This is a poor withering life at the best, for we all do fade as a leaf. Unless we purposely live with a view to the next world, we cannot make much out of our present existence. Such cast clouts and rotten rags as this poor present world of time and sense, can never be made up into an array in which a man would care to robe himself. At the same time, do not be frightened at the unhandsome form in which this life at times appears: it is after all but a vapour; and who will be alarmed at it? Do not be overjoyed as he was who hoped to embrace a goddess, and was deceived by a cloud: it is after all but a semblance; its sorrows are scarcely worth a tear, nor do its joys deserve a smile; vanity and vapour are things which wise men set small store by. Children may be pleased with the bubbles which they blow by the aid of an old pipe and a piece of soap; but as for

men who have put away childish things, they ought not to be greatly moved by the things of this life, for they are but bubbles of less brilliance and less substance than those which delight the boy. "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity." Let the lower lights burn dimly before your eye; they are mere sparks, they are quenched full soon. Let us grip the eternal, and sit loose by the temporal. The jewels of eternity will glitter in our crowns when all things pass away; but the trifles of this life are as the flowers which children pluck in the meadows, which wither in their hands before they can carry them home.

In this place I suggest as your prayer that stanza of the poet, in which he addresses the Well-beloved thus—

"Show me thy face—
My faith and love
Shall henceforth fixed be,
And nothing here have power to move
My soul's serenity.
My life shall seem a trance, a dream,
And all I feel and see
Illusive, visionary,—Thou
The one reality."

Next, Is life most uncertain? We know it is: no one attempts to deny it. It is certain that life will come to an end; but it is most uncertain when it will come to that end. Is it so uncertain? Then let us not delay. I would to God I could whisper this wisdom into every procrastinator's ear. Why dost thou halt and hesitate? If thou art desirous to be saved from the wrath to come, why dost thou put it off till a to-morrow which may never come? Wilt thou delay repenting, and die impenitent? Wilt thou delay faith, and perish as an unbeliever? Wilt thou keep back from mercy and pardon, and refuse the free grace of God? I pray thee do not so; for if thou delay another day, it may be thou wilt be in the land where hope can never come to thee. Think of your peril, O ye ungodly men! Within an hour you may be at the judgment-seat of

God, or in the pit of hell. Nothing keeps you where there is hope except a thread so fine as to be invisible, and so easily broken that none but a madman would trust his soul's destiny upon it. Awake, I pray thee! Since death is hastening, haste thou thyself until thou hast found a refuge in the cleft of the Rock of Ages, and art safe in the arms of Jesus. Since life is so uncertain, oh, haste thee, Christian, to serve thy God while the opportunity is given thee: be diligent to-day to do those works which perfect saints above and holy angels cannot do. Thou wilt soon be where thou canst no more give alms to the poor, nor instruct the ignorant, nor visit the fatherless and the widow. Thou shalt have no opportunities for speaking to men about their souls, or winning them for Christ, when once this shadowy life has vanished away. How earnest every worker ought to be to do his work well while he has the opportunity! I have charged myself again and again—I would to God the charge had been more effectual—to preach

> "As though I ne'er might preach again,
> A dying man to dying men."

I am persuaded that if we were in possession of all the wisdom that grace will give us, we should do every thing for the good of men most speedily, with deep prayerfulness, with true spiritual life, and with an entire dependence upon the Spirit of God for the blessing of it. Come, my brother, what thou doest do quickly. If thou wishest to honour thy Lord whilst thou art here, and win jewels for his crown, up and at it, for the day is far spent. Thou canst not afford to waste a moment, for thou hast much to do, and very little time to do it in. Help us, O Spirit of the Lord!

Is life so short? Does it only appear for a little time, and then vanish away? Then let us put all we can into it. If life be short, it is wisdom to have no fallows, but to sow every foot of ground while we can. It will be prudent to pack our little space as full as

possible. Somebody said the other day of our dear friend Mr. Moody, that he was the only man who could pronounce "Jerusalem" in two syllables. It shows the activity of the man that he can speak as much in two syllables as other people can say in four; he is always at it, working for his Master double tides, rowing with both hands. Some speakers are long in delivering short sense; instead of saying much in little, they say little in much. Oh, for some one to teach them to say "Jerusalem" in two syllables!

Let us put plenty of life into our existence, plenty of work into our life, plenty of heart into our work, and plenty of warmth into our heart. Oh, may God give us to live while we live! May we not only live but be all alive.

Is life so short? Then do not let us make any very great provision for it. I have heard of certain people who are so imprudent that they never lay by anything for a rainy day, to whom I would say, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." It would be a poverty-stricken world if all followed the example of improvidence which is set by certain spiritual blunderers. There is a thriftiness which we all ought to exercise; but there is no justification for laying up treasure which will never be used. Ants do not store up grain for storing's sake: they do but divide over the whole year the harvest of a month. To hoard up endless gold is a species of insanity. If I were going a day's voyage, I should not wish to take with me enough biscuit and salt beef to last for three years; it would only cumber the boat. One walking-stick is an admirable help, as I often find; but to carry a bundle of them when going on a journey would be a superfluity of absurdity. Alas, how many load themselves as if life's journey would last a thousand years, at the least! Some men have amassed hundreds of thousands of pounds; when are they going to enjoy their wealth?

They are getting more and more, and this occupies all their time; they are so busy cooking that they never have time to dine; they are so taken up with filling the wardrobe that they are all in rags. We do not want a ton weight of candles if we are only going to sit up for a few minutes. Let us be wise enough to suit the supply to the need.

Is time so short? Then do not let us fret about its troubles and discomforts. A man is on a journey, and puts up at an inn, and when he is fairly in the hostelry, he perceives that it is a poor place, with scant food, and a hard bed. "Well, well," says he, "I am off the first thing to-morrow morning, and so it does not matter." This world is an inn, and if there are certain discomforts in it, let us remember that we are not tenants for years, but only guests for a day. Let us make the best we can of the temporary accommodation which this poor shanty of a world affords. Our life is removed as a shepherd's tent, which was a hovel in which the shepherds watched their sheep. A shepherd who has to watch the sheep for a short time does not set to work to build a granite palace, or a brick house: he is satisfied with a reed hut, and does not complain of its scant space and slender strength. So let it be with us. Let us sing together—

> "The way may be rough, but it cannot be long;
> So let's smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song."

Must life vanish away? We know it must. What then? That vanishing is the end of one life and the beginning of another. Dear friends, may I recommend you to remember that death is the end of this life? Do not leave this life to be ravelled out at the end. I would like to have a well-hemmed life, with a finish about it. I would like to have my life enclosed with a ring-fence of completeness. Too many leave life's business in such a way that they leave endless trouble for their families: lawyers devour their substance, and

their children are impoverished. See that your will is made, your debts paid, your charities distributed, and all your affairs are arranged. Set your house in order: it is your duty as a citizen; it is your higher duty as a Christian. Do all that you would like to have done if you knew you would die to-morrow. I like Mr. Whitefield's order; for he could not go to bed comfortably if his gloves were not in his hat ready for the morning. He felt that he could not tell when he would be called away; but he wished to have everything in its place whenever the summons should come.

Must this life vanish away? Then recollect it is the beginning of another. The life present melts into the life to come. What kind of life will that other be? Do you not think that if it is to be a glorious life it ought to commence here? Who would like to enter heaven, could it be possible, and feel compelled to say, "I cannot join in the music, for I do not know the tune; I cannot take up the hymn, for I know nothing of the song. I cannot glorify God, for I never did so while below. I cannot adore the Lamb, for I never trusted in him while I was on earth." You must learn the music here, or you will never sing in the choirs of heaven. Oh, that this might arouse some of you! By the memory that this life must vanish away may you be led to seek that eternal life which will abide in its excellency world without end.

And is death quite sure to come to me? Then, as I cannot avoid it, let me face it. If there were a way of avoiding it, I might postpone all consideration of it; but since I must meet it, let me know what I am at; let me get ready for the inevitable, may be it will become desirable. The thought of death will be one of two things to us: it will be a ghost to haunt us if we remain out of Christ, unreconciled to God, and unrenewed in heart. To Godless and Christless persons death will be the king of terrors in prospect and in reality. Ungodly men cannot bear to think of being called away. This morning they feel very uncomfortable while I am treat-

ing upon this troublesome subject. I hope they will not soon recover their composure, but will remain uncomfortable till they yield to divine love, and trust in the living Saviour. Death is an awful thing to those who have their all in this world. If they could but live here for ever, they would be at peace; but it cannot be so. God will not give men an immortality in this life to spend in disregarding him. They must die. They may put Christ far from them, but they cannot put death far from them; they may avoid the Cross, but they cannot avoid the grave. The ungodly man frowns upon death because death frowns upon him. Death is the skeleton in his closet; it is the spectre at the foot of his bed; it is the canker of his fairest joy. I would not like to be in such a position. Count me down all the red gold that could buy this round world, yet would I not accept it if I must live in fear of death.

But death will become another thing to you if you are renewed in heart. To the Christian it is an angel beckoning him onward and upward. It were not worth while to live on earth if this life were not to be crowned by death: I mean by leaving this world to go unto the Father. It is the supreme delight of the man who runs the race that is set before him that that course concludes with the winning-post, and so comes to an end. We are not of those who voyage the sea of this life for the sake of it: we ask not for ever to sail over this rough ocean, we long for land. It is our delight to think of the port ahead, our joy to see the snow-white cliffs of our heavenly Albion. We do not desire to live here always. Why should we? Banished from our God, liable to sin, subject to temptation, vexed with infirmities, struggling with corruptions, O Lord, what wait we for?

> "Welcome, sweet hour of full discharge
> That sets my longing soul at large,
> Takes off my chains, breaks up my cell,
> And gives me with my God to dwell!"

Believers have everything to gain by dying. "To die

is gain." We shall lose nothing which will be a loss to us. If one should take from us a jewel, but should give us another a thousand times its value, we should not regret the exchange. We lose this life, let it be such a jewel as you like, but we win the life to come, which is infinitely more precious. Beloved, instead of fearing death, we would be willing rather to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Why should we be unwilling to be glorified? Our departing day is our marriage-day. Oh, that the bells would ring it in! It is our home-coming from the school where we have been in training here below. Why are the minutes so slow, the years so long? Let the holidays, the holy days, come soon, when we shall be at home in the Father's house! "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," but it very soon will appear, and it will be no mere appearing—it will be real joy and lasting pleasure, solid, substantial, eternal, like the God who has prepared it for us from of old. It is a blessed thing to be able to go through the world thanking God for this life, but blessing him yet more that it will land us at his right hand. Death is thus stripped of all dread; the curse is turned into a blessing. At the thought of it I feel ready to join in that rough but sweet verse—

> "Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing,
> But gladly put off these garments of clay;
> To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,
> Since Jesus to glory through death led the way."

God grant us so to live and die that we may live to die no more, for Christ's sake. Amen.

"THOUGH HE WERE DEAD."

"Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"—JOHN xi. 24–26.

MARTHA is a very accurate type of a class of anxious believers. They do believe truly, but not with such confidence as to lay aside their care. They do not distrust the Lord, or question the truth of what he says, yet they puzzle their brain about "How shall this thing be?" and so they miss the major part of the present comfort which the word of the Lord would minister to their hearts if they received it more simply. *How?* and *why?* belong unto the Lord. It is his business to arrange matters so as to fulfil his own promises. If we would sit at our Lord's feet with Mary, and consider what he has promised, we should choose a better part than if we ran about with Martha, crying, "How can these things be?"

Martha, you see, in this case, when the Lord Jesus Christ told her that her brother would rise again, replied, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." She was a type, I say, of certain anxious believers, for she *set a practical bound to the Saviour's words.* "Of course there will be a resurrection, and then my brother will rise with the rest." She concluded that the Saviour could not mean anything beyond that. The first meaning and the commonest meaning that suggests itself to her must be what Jesus means. Is not that the way with many of us? We had a statesman

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Delivered on Sunday morning, September 14, 1884, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

once, and a good man too, who loved reform; but whenever he had accomplished a little progress, he considered that all was done. We called him at last "Finality John," for he was always coming to an ultimatum, and taking for his motto "Rest, and be thankful." Into that style Christian people too frequently drop with regard to the promises of God. We limit the Holy One of Israel as to the meaning of his words. Of course they mean so much, but we cannot allow that they intend more. It were well if the spirit of progress would enter into our faith, so that we felt within our souls that we had never beheld the innermost glory of the Lord's words of grace. We often wonder that the disciples put such poor meanings upon our Lord's words, but I fear we are almost as far off as they were from fully comprehending all his gracious teachings. Are we not still as little children, making little out of great words? Have we grasped as yet a tithe of our Lord's full meaning, in many of his sayings of love? When he is talking of bright and sparkling gems of benediction, we are thinking of common pebble-stones in the brook of mercy; when he speaketh of stars and heavenly crowns, we think of sparks and childish coronals of fading flowers. Oh that we could but have our intellect cleared; better still, could have our understanding expanded, or, best of all, our faith increased, so as to reach to the height of our Lord's great arguments of love!

Martha also had another fault in which she was very like ourselves: she *laid the words of Jesus on the shelf*, as things so trite and sure that they were of small practical importance. "Thy brother shall rise again." Now, if she had possessed faith enough, she might truthfully have said, "Lord, I thank thee for that word! I expect within a short space to see him sitting at the table with thee. I put the best meaning possible upon thy words, for I know that thou art always better than I can think thee to be; and therefore I expect to see my beloved Lazarus walk home from the sepulchre before the sun sets again." But no, she lays the truth aside as a matter

past all dispute, and says, "I know that my brother shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." A great many precious truths are laid up by us like the old hulks in the Medway, never to see service any more, or like aged pensioners at Chelsea, as relics of the past. We say "Yes, quite true, we fully believe that doctrine." Somehow it is almost as bad to lay up a doctrine in lavender as it is to throw it out of window. When you so believe a truth as to put it to bed and smother it with the bolster of neglect, it is much the same as if you did not believe it at all. An official belief is very much akin to infidelity. Some persons never question a doctrine: that is not their line of temptation; they accept the gospel as true, but then they never expect to see its promises practically carried out; it is a proper thing to believe, but by no means a prominent, practical factor in actual life. It is true but it is mysterious, misty, mythical, far removed from the realm of practical common sense. We do with the promises often as a poor old couple did with a precious document, which might have cheered their old age had they used it according to its real value. A gentleman stepping into a poor woman's house saw framed and glazed upon the wall a French note for a thousand francs. He said to the old folks, "How came you by this?" They informed him that a poor French soldier had been taken in by them and nursed until he died, and he had given them that little picture when he was dying as a memorial of him. They thought it such a pretty souvenir that they had framed it, and there it was adorning the cottage wall. They were greatly surprised when they were told that it was worth a sum which would be quite a little fortune for them if they would but turn it into money. Are we not equally unpractical with far more precious things? Have you not certain of the words of your great Lord framed and glazed in your hearts, and do you not say to yourselves, "They are so sweet and precious"? and yet you have never turned them into actual blessing—never used them in the hour of need. You

have done as Martha did when she took the words, "Thy brother shall rise again," and put round about them this handsome frame, "in the resurrection at the last day." Oh that we had grace to turn God's bullion of gospel into current coin, and use them as our present spending money.

Moreover, Martha made another blunder, and that was *setting the promise in the remote distance.* This is a common folly, this distancing the promises of the Most High. "In the resurrection at the last day"—no doubt she thought it a very long way off, and therefore she did not get much comfort out of it. Telescopes are meant to bring objects near to the eye, but I have known people use the mental telescope in the wrong way: they always put the big end of it to their eye, and then the glass sends the object further away. Her brother was to be raised that very day: she might so have understood the Saviour, but instead of it she looked at his words through the wrong end of the glass, and said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Brethren, do not refuse the present blessing. Death and heaven, or the advent and the glory, are at your doors. A little while and he that will come shall come, and will not tarry. Think not that the Lord is slack concerning his promise. Do not say in your heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming"; or dream that his words of love are only for the dim future. In the ages to come marvels shall be revealed, but even the present hour is bejewelled with loving-kindness. To-day the Lord has rest, and peace, and joy to give to you. Lose not these treasures by unbelief.

Martha also appears to me to have *made the promise unreal and impersonal.* "Thy brother shall rise again": to have realised that would have been a great comfort to her, but she mixes Lazarus up with all the rest of the dead. "Yes, he will rise in the resurrection at the last day; when thousands of millions shall be rising from their graves, no doubt Lazarus will rise with the rest." That is the way with us; we take the promise and say,

"This is true to all the children of God." If so it is true to us; but we miss *that* point. What a blessing God has bestowed upon the covenanted people! Yes, and you are one of them: but you shake your head, as if the word was not for you. It is a fine feast, and yet you are hungry; it is a full and flowing stream, but you remain thirsty. Why is this? Somehow the generality of your apprehension misses the sweetness which comes of personal appropriation. There is such a thing as speaking of the promises in a magnificent style, and yet being in deep spiritual poverty; as if a man should boast of the wealth of old England, and the vast amount of treasure in the Bank, while he does not possess a penny wherewith to bless himself. In your case you know it is your own fault that you are poor and miserable, for if you would but exercise an appropriating faith you might possess a boundless heritage. If you are a child of God all things are yours, and you may help yourself. If you are hungry at this banquet it is for want of faith: if you are thirsty by the brink of this river it is because you do not stoop down and drink. Behold, God is your portion: the Father is your shepherd, the Son of God is your food, and the Spirit of God is your comforter. Rejoice and be glad, and grasp with the firm hand of a personal faith that royal boon which Jesus sets before you in his promises.

I beg you to observe how the Lord Jesus Christ in great wisdom dealt with Martha. In the first place, he did not grow angry with her. There is not a trace of petulance in his speech. He did not say to her, "Martha, I am ashamed of you that you should have such low thoughts of me." She thought that she was honouring Jesus when she said,—"I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Her idea of Jesus was that he was a great prophet who would ask of God and obtain answers to his prayers; she has not grasped the truth of his own personal power to give and sustain life. But the Saviour did not say, "Martha, these are low and grovelling ideas

of your Lord and Saviour." He did not chide her, though she lacked wisdom,—wisdom which she ought to have possessed. I do not think God's people learn much by being scolded; it is not the habit of the great Lord to scold his disciples, and therefore they do not take it well when his servants take upon themselves to rate them. If ever you meet with one of the Lord's own who falls far short of the true ideal of the gospel, do not bluster and upbraid. Who taught you what you know? He that has taught you did it of his infinite love and grace and pity, and he was very tender with you, for you were doltish enough; therefore be tender with others, and give them line upon line, even as your Lord was gentle towards you. It ill becomes a servant to lose patience where his Master shows so much.

The Lord Jesus, with gentle spirit, proceeded to teach her more of the things concerning himself. More of Jesus! More of Jesus! That is the sovereign cure for our faults. He revealed himself to her, that in him she might behold reasons for a clearer hope and a more substantial faith. How sweetly fell those words upon her ear: "I am the resurrection and the life"! Not "I can get resurrection by my prayers," but "I am, myself, the resurrection." God's people need to know more of what Jesus is, more of the fulness which it has pleased the Father to place in him. Some of them know quite enough of what they are themselves, and they will break their hearts if they go on reading much longer in that black-letter book: they need, I say, to rest their eyes upon the person of their Lord, and to spy out all the riches of grace which lie hidden in him; then they will pluck up courage, and look forward with surer expectancy. When our Lord said, "I am the resurrection and the life," he indicated to Martha that resurrection and life were not gifts which he must seek, nor even boons which he must create; but that he himself was the resurrection and the life: these things were wherever he was. He was the author, and giver, and maintainer of life, and that life was himself. He would

have her to know that he was himself precisely what she wanted for her brother. She did know a little of the Lord's power, for she said, "If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died," which being very kindly interpreted might mean, "Lord, thou art the life." "Ah, but," saith Jesus, "you must also learn that I am the resurrection! You already admit that if I had been here Lazarus would not have died; I would have you further learn that I being here your brother shall live though he has died; and that when I am with my people none of them shall die for ever, for I am to them the resurrection and the life." Poor Martha was looking up into the sky for life, or gazing down into the deeps for resurrection, when the Resurrection and the Life stood before her, smiling upon her, and cheering her heavy heart. She had thought of what Jesus might have done if he had been there before; now let her know what he *is* at the present moment.

Thus I have introduced the text to you, and I pray God the Holy Spirit to bless these prefatory observations; for if we learn only these first lessons we shall not have been here in vain. Let us construe promises in their largest sense, let us regard them as real, and set them down as facts. Let us look to the Promiser, even to Jesus the Lord, and not so much to the difficulties which surround the accomplishment of the promise. In beginning the divine life let us look to Jesus, and in afterwards running the heavenly race let us still be looking unto Jesus, till we see in him our all in all. When both eyes look on Jesus we are in the light; but when we have one eye for him, and one eye for self, all is darkness. Oh, to see him with all our soul's eyes!

Now, I am going to speak as I am helped of the Spirit; and I shall proceed thus—first, by asking you to *view the text as a stream of comfort to Martha and other bereaved persons;* and, secondly, to *view it as a great deep of comfort to all believers.*

I. First, I long for you to VIEW THE TEXT AS A STREAM OF COMFORT TO MARTHA AND OTHER BEREAVED PERSONS.

Observe, in the beginning, that *the presence of Jesus Christ means life and resurrection.* It meant that to Lazarus. If Jesus comes to Lazarus, Lazarus must live. Had Martha taken the Saviour's words literally, as she should have done, as I have already told you, she would have had immediate comfort from them; and the Saviour intended her to understand them in that sense. He virtually says, "I am to Lazarus the Power that can make him live again; and I am the Power that can keep him in life. Yea, I am the resurrection and the life." A statement so understood would have been very comfortable to her. Nothing could have been more so. It would there and then have abolished death so far as her brother was concerned. Somebody says, "But I do not see that this is any comfort *to us*, for if Jesus be here, yet it is only a spiritual presence, and we cannot expect to see our dear mother, or child, or husband raised from the dead thereby." I answer that our Lord Jesus is able at this moment to give us back our departed ones, for he is still the resurrection and the life. But let me ask you whether you really wish that Jesus would raise your departed ones from the dead. You say at first, "Of course I do wish it"; but I would ask you to reconsider that decision; for I believe that upon further thought you will say, "No, I could not wish it." Do you really desire to see your glorified husband sent back again to this world of care and pain? Would you have your father or mother deprived of the glories which they are now enjoying in order that they might help you in the struggles of this mortal life? Would you discrown the saints? You are not so cruel. That dear child, would you have it back from among the angels, and from the inner glory, to come here and suffer again? You would not have it so. And to my mind it is a comfort to you, or should be, that it is not within your power to have it so; because you might be tempted in some selfish moment to accept the doubtful boon. Lazarus could return, and fit into his place again, but scarcely one in ten thousand could do so. There would

be serious drawbacks in the return of those whom we have loved best. Do you cry, "Give me back my father! Give me back my friend"? You know not what you ask. It might be a cause of regret to you as long as they lingered here, for you would each morning think to yourself, "Beloved one, I have brought you out of heaven by my wish. I have robbed you of infinite felicity to gratify myself." For my own part, I had rather that the Lord Jesus should keep the keys of death than that he should lend them to me. It would be too dreadful a privilege to be empowered to rob heaven of the perfected merely to give pleasure to imperfect ones below. Jesus would raise them now if he knew it to be right; I do not wish to take the government from his shoulder. It is more comfortable to me to think that Jesus Christ could give them back to me, and would if it were for his glory and my good. My dear ones that lie asleep could be awakened in an instant if the Master thought it best; but it would not be best, and therefore even I would hold his skirt, and say, "Tread softly, Master! Do not arouse them! I shall go to them, but they shall not return to me. It is not my wish they should return: it is better that they should be with thee where thou art, to behold thy glory." It does not seem to me, then, dear friend, that you are one whit behind Martha; and you ought to be comforted while Jesus says to you, "I am even now the resurrection and the life."

Furthermore, here is comfort which we may each one safely take, namely, that *when Jesus comes the dead shall live.* The Revised Version has it, "He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live." We do not know when our Lord will descend from heaven, but we do know the message of the angel, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." The Lord will come; we may not question the certainty of his appearing. When he cometh, all his redeemed shall live with him. The trump of the

archangel shall startle the happy sleepers, and they shall wake to put on their beauteous array; the body transformed and made like unto Christ's glorious body shall be once more wrapt about them as the vesture of their perfected and emancipated spirits. Then our brother shall rise again, and all our dear ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus the Lord will bring with him. This is the glorious hope of the church, wherein we see the death of death, and the destruction of the grave. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Then we are also told that *when Jesus comes, living believers shall not die.* After the coming of Christ there shall be no more death for his people. What does Paul say? "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all *die*, but we shall all be changed." Did I see a little schoolgirl put up her finger? Did I hear her say, "Please, sir, you made a mistake"? So I did; I made it on purpose. Paul did not say, "We shall not all *die*," for the Lord had already said, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never *die*"; so Paul would not say that any of us should die, but he used his Master's own term, and said, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." When the Lord comes there will be no more death; we who are alive and remain (as some of us may be—we cannot tell) will undergo a sudden transformation—for flesh and blood, as they are, cannot inherit the kingdom of God—and by that transformation our bodies shall be made meet to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." There shall be no more death then. Here, then, we have two sacred handkerchiefs with which to wipe the eyes of mourners: when Christ cometh the dead shall live; when Christ cometh those that live shall never die. Like Enoch, or Elias, we shall pass into the glory state without wading through the black stream, while those who have already forded it shall prove to have been no losers thereby. All this is in connection with Jesus. Resurrection with Jesus is resurrection indeed. Life in Jesus is life indeed. It endears to us resurrection, glory,

eternal life, and ultimate perfection, when we see them all coming to us in Jesus. He is the golden pot which hath this manna, the rod which beareth these almonds, the life whereby we live.

But further, I have not made you drink deep enough of this stream yet,—I think our Saviour meant that *even now his dead are alive.* "He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live." Those that believe in Jesus Christ appear to die, but yet they live. They are not in the grave, they are for ever with the Lord. They are not unconscious, they are with their Lord in Paradise. Death cannot kill a believer, it can only usher him into a freer form of life. Because Jesus lives, his people live. God is not the God of the dead but of the living: those who have departed have not perished. We laid the precious body in the cemetery, and we set up stones at the head and foot; but we might engrave on them the Lord's words, "She is not dead, but sleepeth." True, an unbelieving generation may laugh us to scorn, but we scorn their laughing.

Again, *even now his living do not die.* There is an essential difference between the decease of the godly and the death of the ungodly. Death comes to the ungodly man as a penal infliction, but to the righteous as a summons to his Father's palace: to the sinner it is an execution, to the saint an undressing. Death to the wicked is the King of terrors: death to the saint is the end of terrors, the commencement of glory. To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing. Death is ours; it is set down in the list of our possessions among the all things, and it follows life in the list as if it were an equal favour. No longer is it death to die. The name remains, but the thing itself is changed. Wherefore, then, are we in bondage through fear of death? Why do we dread the process which gives us liberty? I am told that persons who in the cruel ages had lain in prison for years suffered much more in the moment of the knocking off of their fetters than they had endured for months in wearing the hard iron; and yet I suppose that no

man languishing in a dungeon would have been unwilling to stretch out his arm or leg, that the heavy chains might be beaten off by the smith. We should all be content to endure that little inconvenience to obtain lasting liberty. Now, such is death—the knocking off of the fetters; yet the iron may never seem to be so truly iron as when that last liberating blow of grace is about to fall. Let us not mind the harsh grating of the key as it turns in the lock; if we understand it aright it will be as music to our ears. Imagine that your last hour is come! The key turns with pain for a moment; but, lo, the bolt is shot! The iron gate is open! The spirit is free! Glory be unto the Lord for ever and ever!

II. I leave the text now as a stream of comfort for the bereaved, for I wish you to VIEW IT AS A GREAT DEEP OF COMFORT FOR ALL BELIEVERS. I cannot fathom it, any more than I could measure the abyss, but I can invite you to survey it by the help of the Holy Ghost.

Methinks, first, this text plainly teaches that *the Lord Jesus Christ is the life of his people.* We are dead by nature, and you can never produce life out of death: the essential elements are wanting. Should a spark be lingering among the ashes, you may yet fan it to a flame; but from human nature the last spark of heavenly life is gone, and it is vain to seek for life among the dead. The life of every Christian is Christ. He is the beginning of life, being the Resurrection: when he comes to us we live. Regeneration is the result of contact with Christ: we are begotten again unto living hope by his resurrection from the dead. The life of the Christian in its commencement is in Christ alone; not a fragment of it is from himself, and the continuance of that life is equally the same; Jesus is not only the resurrection to begin with, but the life to go on with. "I have life in myself," saith one. I answer—not otherwise than as you are one with Christ: your spiritual life in every breath it draws is in Christ. If you are regarded for a moment as separated from Christ, you are cast forth as

a branch and are withered. A member severed from the head is dead flesh and no more. In union to Christ is your life. Oh that our hearers would understand this! I see a poor sinner look into himself, and look again, and then cry, "I cannot see any life within!" Of course you cannot; you have no life of your own. "Alas," cries a Christian, "I cannot find anything within to feed my soul with!" Do you expect to feed upon yourself? Must not Israel look up for the manna? Did one of all the tribes find it in his own bosom? To look to self is to turn to a broken cistern which can hold no water. I tell you you must learn that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Hearken to that great "I"—that infinite EGO! This must cover over and swallow up your little *ego*. "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." What are you? Less than nothing, and vanity; but over all springs up that divine, all-sufficient personality, "I am the resurrection and the life." Take the two first words together, and they seem to me to have a wondrous majesty about them—"I AM!" Here is Self-Existence. Life in himself! Even as the Mediator, the Lord Jesus tells us that it is given him to have life in himself, even as the Father hath life in himself (John v. 26). *I am* fills the yawning mouth of the sepulchre. He that liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, declares, "*I am* the resurrection and the life." If, then, I want to live unto God, I must have Christ; and if I desire to continue to live unto God I must continue to have Christ; and if I aspire to have that life developed to the utmost fulness of which it is capable, I must find it all in Christ. He has come not only that we may have life, but that we may have it more abundantly. Anything that is beyond the circle of Christ is death. If I conjure up an experience over which I foolishly dote, which puffs me up as so perfect that I need not come to Christ now as a poor empty-handed sinner, I have entered into the realm of death, I have introduced into my soul a damning leaven. Away with it! Away

with it! Everything of life is put into this golden casket of Christ Jesus: all else is death. We have not a breath of life anywhere but in Jesus, who ever liveth to give life. He saith, "Because I live, ye shall live also," and this is true. We live not for any other reason—not because of anything in us or connected with us, but only because of Jesus. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Now, further, in this great deep to which we would conduct you, *faith is the only channel by which we can draw from Jesus our life.* "I am the resurrection, and the life: *he that believeth in me*": that is it. He does not say, "He that loves me," though love is a bright grace, and very sweet to God: he does not say, "He that serves me," though every one that believes in Christ will endeavour to serve him; but it is not put so: he does not even say, "He that imitates me," though every one that believes in Christ must and will imitate him; but it is put, "He that believeth in me." Why is that? Why doth the Lord so continually make faith to be the only link between himself and the soul? I take it, because faith is a grace which arrogates nothing to itself, and has no operation apart from Jesus, to whom it unites us. You want to conduct the electric fluid, and, in order to this, you find a metal which will not create any action of its own; if it did so, it would disturb the current which you wish to send along it. If it set up an action of its own, how would you know the difference between what came of the metal and what came of the battery? Now, faith is an empty-handed receiver and communicator; it is nothing apart from that upon which it relies, and therefore it is suitable to be a conductor for grace. When an auditorium has to be erected for a speaker in which he may be plainly heard, the essential thing is to get rid of all echo. When you have no echo, then you have a perfect building: faith makes no noise of its own, it allows the Word to speak. Faith cries, "*Non nobis Domine!* Not unto us! Not unto us." Christ puts his crown on faith's head, exclaiming, "Thy faith

hath saved thee;" but faith hastens to ascribe all the glory of salvation to Jesus only. So you see why the Lord selects faith rather than any other grace, because it is a self-forgetting thing. It is best adapted to be the tubing through which the water of life runs, because it will not communicate a flavour of its own, but will just convey the stream purely and simply from Christ to the soul. "He that believeth in me."

Now notice, *to the reception of Christ by faith there is no limit.* "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever"—I am deeply in love with that word "whosoever." It is a splendid word. A person who kept many animals had some great dogs and some little ones, and in his eagerness to let them enter his house freely he had two holes cut in the door, one for the big dogs and another for the little dogs. You may well laugh, for the little dogs could surely have come in wherever there was room for the larger ones. This "whosoever" is the great opening, suitable for sinners of every size. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Has any man a right to believe in Christ? The gospel gives every creature the right to believe in Christ, for we are bidden to preach it to every creature, with this command, "Hear, and your soul shall live." Every man has a right to believe in Christ, because he will be damned if he does not, and he must have a right to do that which will bring him into condemnation if he does it not. It is written, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," and that makes it clear that I, whoever I may be, as I have a right to endeavour to escape from damnation, have a right to avail myself of the blessed command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and live." Oh that "whosoever," that hole in the door for the big dog! Do not forget it! Come along with you, and put your trust in Christ. If you can only get linked with Christ you are a living man; if but a finger touches his garment's hem you are made whole. Only the touch of

faith, and the virtue flows from him to you, and he is to you the resurrection and the life.

I desire you to notice that *there is no limit to this power.* Before I was ill this time, and even since, I have had to deal with such a swarm of despairing sinners, that if I have not pulled them up they have pulled me down. I have been trying to speak very large words for Christ when I have met with those disconsolate ones. I hear one say, "How far can Christ be life to a sinner? I feel myself to be utterly wrong, I am altogether wrong; there is nothing right about me: though I have eyes I cannot see, though I have ears I do not hear; if I have a hand I cannot use it, if I have a foot I cannot run with it—I seem altogether wrong." Yes, but if you believe in Christ, though you were still more wrong—that is to say, though you were dead, which is the wrongest state in which a man's body can be,—though you were dead yet shall you live. You look at the spiritual thermometer, and you say, "How low will the grace of God go? will it descend to summer heat? will it touch the freezing point? will it go to zero?" Yes, it will go below the lowest conceivable point,—lower than any instrument can indicate: it will go below the zero of death. If you believe in Jesus, though you are not only wrong, but dead, yet shall you live.

But, says another, "I feel so weak. I cannot understand, I cannot lay hold of things; I cannot pray. I cannot do anything. All I can do is feebly to trust in Jesus." All right! Though you had gone further than that, and were so weak as to be dead, yet should you live. Though the weakness had turned to a dire paralysis, that left you altogether without strength, yet it is written, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "Oh, Sir," says one, "I am so unfeeling." Mark you, these generally are the most feeling people in the world. "I am sorry every day because I cannot be sorry for my sin"—that is the way they talk; it is very absurd, but still very real to them. "Oh," cries one, "the earth shook, the sun was darkened, the rocks

rent, the very dead came out of their graves at the death of Christ.

> 'Of feeling all things show some sign
> But this unfeeling heart of mine.'"

Yet if thou believest, unfeeling as thou art, thou livest; for if thou wert gone further than numbness to deadness, yet if thou believest in him thou shalt live.

But the poor creature fetches a sigh, and cries, "Sir, it is not only that I have no feeling, but I am become objectionable and obnoxious to everybody. I am a weariness to myself and to others. I am sure when I come to tell you my troubles you must wish me at Jericho, or somewhere else far away." Now, I admit that such a thought *has* occurred to us sometimes when we have been very busy, and some poor soul has grown prosy with rehearsing his seven-times-repeated miseries; but if you were to get more wearisome still, if you were to become so bad that people would as soon see a corpse as see you, yet remember Jesus says, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Ay, if you went so far as to go in and out among men like an unquiet ghost, so that everybody got out of your way, it would not put you beyond the promise, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

"Oh, sir, I have no hope; my case is quite hopeless!" Very well; but if you had got beyond that, so that you were dead, and could not even know you had no hope, yet if you believed in him you should live. "Oh, but I have tried everything, and there is nothing more for me to attempt. I have read books, I have spoken to Christians, and I am nothing bettered." No doubt it is quite so; but if you had even passed beyond that stage, so that you could not try anything more, yet if you did believe in Jesus you should live. Oh, the blessed power of faith! Nay, rather say the matchless power of him who is the resurrection and the life; for though the poor believer were dead, yet shall he live! Glory be to the Lord who works so wonderfully.

To conclude, if you once do believe in Christ, and come to live, there is this sweet reflection for you, "*Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*" Our Arminian friends say that you may be a child of God to-day and a child of the devil to-morrow. Write out that statement, and place at the bottom of it the name "*Arminius,*" and then put the scrap of paper into the fire: it is the best thing you can do with it, for there is no truth in it. Jesus says, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Here is a very literal translation—"And every one who lives and believes on me, in no wise shall die for ever." This is from "The Englishman's Greek New Testament," and nothing can be better. The believer may pass through the natural change called death, as far as his body is concerned; but as for his soul it cannot die, for it is written, "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "He that believeth in me hath everlasting life." "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." These are not "ifs" and "buts," and faint hopes; but they are dead certainties, nay, living certainties, out of the mouth of the living Lord himself. You get the life of God in your soul, and you shall never die. "Do you mean that I may do as I like, and live in sin?" No, man, I mean nothing of the sort; what right have you to impute such teaching as that to me? I mean that you shall not love sin and live in it, for that is death; but you shall live unto God. Your likes shall be so radically changed that you shall abhor evil all your days, and long to be holy as God is holy; and you shall be kept from transgression, and shall not go back to wallow in sin. If in some evil hour you backslide, yet shall you be restored; and the main current of your life shall be from the hour of your regeneration towards God, and holiness, and heaven. The angels that rejoiced over you when you repented made no mistake; they shall

go on to rejoice till they welcome you amidst the everlasting songs and Hallelujahs of the blessed at the right hand of God. Believest thou this? Come, poor soul, believest thou this? Who are you? That does not matter, you can get into the "whosoever." That ark will hold all God's Noahs. What have you done? One said to me the other day, "I should like to tell you some of my sins!" I answered quickly, "I would like you would not; I have enough of my own without being infected with yours." What is any man that he should have the filth of another man's drains poured into his ear? No, no: confess to God, but not to man unless you have wronged him, and confession of the wrong is due to him.

"Ah," saith one, "you don't know what I am." No, and I don't want to know what you are; but if you are so far gone that there seems to be not even a ghost of a shade of a shadow of a hope anywhere about you, yet if you believe in Jesus you shall live. Trust the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is worthy to be trusted. Throw yourself upon him, and he will carry you in his bosom. Cast your whole weight upon his atonement; it will bear the strain. Hang on him as the vessel hangs on the nail, and seek no other support. Depend upon Christ with all your might just as you now are, and as the Lord liveth you shall live, and as Christ reigneth you shall reign over sin, and as Christ cometh to glory you shall partake of that glory for ever and ever. Amen.

CONCERNING PRAYER.

"Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me."—PSALM lxxxvi. 6, 7.

WHEN I was reading this eighty-sixth Psalm, I reminded you that the title of it is "A prayer of David." It is rightly named "*A prayer*," for it is very especially filled with supplication. There are four other psalms each called by the name *Tephillah*, or "prayer," but this deserves to be distinguished from the rest and known as "the prayer *of David*," even as the ninetieth Psalm is known as "the prayer of Moses." It savours of David. The man of sincerity, of ardour, of trials, of faults, and of great heart, pleads, sobs, and trusts through all the verses of this psalm.

Note one thing about this remarkable prayer of David—it is almost entirely devoid of poetry. Men use grand, studied, rapturous, and poetical expressions in their praises; and they do well. Let God be praised with the noblest thoughts, as well as the most charming music. But when a man comes to prayer, and that prayer is out of the depths of sorrow, he has no time or thought for poetry. He goes straight at the matter in hand, and pleads with God in downright plainness of speech. You shall notice that in happy prayers, in times of joy, men use similes, and metaphors, and tropes, and symbols, and the like; but when it comes to wrestling with God in times of agony, there is no beauty of speech: parable and poesy are laid aside. The man's language is in sackcloth and ashes; or, better still, it stands stripped

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for wrestling, every superfluous word being laid aside. Then the cry is heard, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." That is not poetry, but it is a great deal better. Throughout this psalm David is a plain-dealer, speaking with God in downright earnest. He has got his grip of the covenant angel, and he will not let him go. Men cannot study where to put their feet prettily when they are wrestling: they have to do the best they can to hold their ground, and fling their antagonist. In such a prayer-psalm as this, there is no studying of language: it is the pouring out of the heart as the heart boils over, the utterance of the desires as they bubble up from the soul's deeps, with an entire carelessness as to the fashion of the expression.

This ought to be a hint to you when you pray. Do not study how to arrange your words when you come before the Lord. Leave the expression to the occasion: it shall be given you in the selfsame hour what you shall speak. When your heart is like a boiling geyser, let it steam aloft in pillars of prayer. The overflowing of the soul is the best praying in the world. Prayers that are indistinct, inharmonious, broken, made up of sighs and cries, and damped with tears—these are the prayers which win with heaven. Prayers that you cannot pray, pleadings too big for utterance, prayers that stagger the words, and break their backs, and crush them down—these are the very best prayers that God ever hears.

So, you say, dear friends, that you cannot pray; you are so troubled that you cannot speak. Well, then, copy the beggars in the street. They must not beg, for that is contrary to law. But a man sits down, and writes on a spade, "I am starving," and he looks as white as a sheet. What a picture of misery! He is not begging; not he; but the money comes dropping into the old hat. So, when you cannot pray, I believe that your silent display of utter inability is the best sort of praying. The blessing comes when we sit down before the Lord, and in sheer desperation expose our spiritual need.

I am not going to dwell longer upon that matter, but

will simply show you what was the nature of David's prayer. There are two things which David must have when he prays—two great things after which he strains with his whole heart. The first is *personal intercourse with God.* Read that sixth verse: "Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications." And, in the second place, he must have *personal answers from God.* He is not content to pray without prayer having some practical result. So, the seventh verse is, "In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me."

I. First, then, David in his prayer sought, beyond all things, to have PERSONAL INTERCOURSE WITH GOD. To my mind that is just the distinction between prayer before conversion, and prayer after it. I often bring that out when I am seeing enquirers who have been religiously brought up. This is the sort of dialogue we hold: "You used to pray, did you?" "Yes, sir; I could not have gone to sleep if I had not said my prayers." "Was there any difference between that kind of praying and what you now practise?" The reply usually is, "Well, sir, I do not now call the first praying at all. I used to say some good words that I had been taught, but I did not say them *to anybody;* now I speak to God, and I have the feeling that he is hearing what I say, and that he is present with me in my room." It is the realization of that second person as really present, the consciousness of the divine presence, which makes prayer real. What can be the good of going through a form of prayer? Can there be any charm in a set of sentences? If you are not speaking to God, what are you doing? I should say that a prayer would do as much good repeated backwards as forwards, if it is not spoken to God. We have heard of instances of grown up persons keeping on saying the prayer which their mother taught them, and asking that God would bless their father and mother, after they had been dead twenty years. All sorts of absurdities, I do not doubt, have come from the long-continued and thoughtless repetition of mere words. I

am not now speaking against the use of a form of prayer, if you feel that you can pray with it; but the point is, that you must be speaking *to God*, and you must have personal intercourse with the invisible One, or else there is nothing whatever in your prayer, whether it be composed on the spot, or repeated from memory.

Note well, that David, while he thus sought to have dealings with God, to come to close grips with the Lord in the act of prayer, was not presumptuously bold. *He perceives the condescension of such fellowship on God's part.* This may be seen in the psalm. If you have the psalm open before you, kindly begin with the first line: "Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me." As if he said, "Thou art so high that, unless thou shalt stoop, and stoop very low, thou canst not commune with me. But, Lord, do thus stoop. Bow down thine ear. From thy lofty throne, higher than an angel's wing can reach, stoop thou down and listen to me—poor, feeble me." This is what we must have in order to true prayer. Our prayer must climb to that great ear which hears the symphonies of the perfected, and the hallelujahs of cherubim and seraphim. Is there not something very wonderful about this, that we, who are both insignificant and unworthy, should be able to speak to him who made the stars, and upholds all things by the word of his power? Yet this is the essence of prayer: to rise, in human feebleness to talk with divine omnipotence; in nothingness to deal with all-sufficiency. You cannot venture upon this without the Mediator, Christ; but with the Mediator, what a wonderful fellowship a worm of the dust is permitted to enjoy with the infinite God! What condescension there is in a sinner communing with the thrice-holy Jehovah! Seek after this intercourse; nothing can excel it.

As you further read in this psalm, you will notice that David, in order to obtain this high privilege, *pleads his need of it.* He cries, "I am poor and needy": as much as to say, "Lord, do come to me, do let me have personal intercourse with thee, for nothing else will serve my turn. I am so poor that thou alone canst enrich me; I am so

feeble, that thou alone canst sustain me. Thou hast made me: Lord, forsake not the work of thine own hands! I, thy child, am full of wants, which thou only canst supply. Oh, deal with me in great compassion!" Virtually his plea is,

> "Do not turn away thy face,
> Mine's an urgent, pressing case."

Now, is not this very encouraging, that your claim upon God should lie in your need? You cannot say to God, "Lord, look at me, and commune with me, for I am somebody"; but you may say, "Lord, commune with me, for I am nobody." You may not cry, "Lord, help me, for I can do much"; but you may cry, "Lord, help me, for I can do nothing." Your need is your most prevalent plea with God. When you are desiring to pray such a prayer as consists in intercourse with God, it is great condescension on his part to draw near to you; but he will condescend to your needs, and come near, because your misery needs his presence. God will not condescend to your pride, but he will bow his ear to your grief. If you set up a claim to merit, he will turn his back upon you; but if you come to him with a claim of necessity, which is merely a beggar's claim when he asks for alms—an appeal to the charity of God's sovereign love, then he will turn about and hear your prayer. Come, my heart, art thou not encouraged to come near to God, seeing he hath respect to thy low estate, and pitieth thy sorrows?

Read on, and you will find that David, in order to come into intercourse with God, next *pleads his personal consecration:* "Preserve my soul; for I am holy." By this I understand him to mean, that he belongs to God; that he is consecrated and dedicated to the divine service. Should not the priest handle the golden bowl? Should not the priest enter into the holy place? And should not God therefore come and deal with the man who is dedicated to his use, and set apart to his service?

My dear brothers and sisters, can you say to-night that you live for God? Do you recognize that you are not your own, but bought with a price? Well, there dwells an argument in that fact—a reason why the Lord God should come and take hold of you, and link himself with you. You are the vessels of his sanctuary, you are the instruments of his divine service, you are consecrated to his honour, and you may expect him therefore to touch you with his hand, to employ you in his work, and to identify himself with you in your circumstances and necessities.

Moreover, David, anxious to use every argument, *pleads his trust:* "Save thy servant that trusteth in thee." This is a conquering plea: "Lord, my sole reliance is on thee; come to me, then, and justify the confidence which thou thyself hast inspired." "Without faith it is impossible to please God;" but when God has given us faith, then we may be quite sure that we do please him; and if we please him, then, like Enoch, who pleased him, we shall walk with him. You may expect, in prayer, to find God drawing near to you, if in very deed you are holding to him as the one ground of your confidence. Brethren, are you sure that you do trust in God? You answer, "Yes." Ah! then let me say to you, that you shall have a reward, and that reward will probably be that you will be taught to trust him more. That you may rise to a larger faith you will probably suffer greater troubles than you have hitherto known. The reward of service is more service. A good soldier, who has fought through many battles, and won many victories, shall be sent out to the wars next time his master's forces want a captain. You, having already trusted, shall have your faith further tried, in order that you may glorify God, and so arrive at a greater faith. Do you not see that faith largely lies in the realization that God is, and that God is near? And if you so realize God when you bow the knee in prayer, you may expect to have sweet intercourse with him. Many years ago I trusted God about many things, and

I found him true; but of late I have had to take a step in advance, and trust God wholly and alone, in the teeth of all appearances. I have been called almost literally to stand alone in contending against error; and in this I have distinctly taken a nearer place in prayer with the God whom I serve in my spirit. It is very well to rest on God when you have other props, but it is best of all to rest on him when every prop is knocked away. To hang on the bare arm of God is glorious dependence; and he that has once done it, cannot think of ever going back to trust in men again. "No," says he, "I tried you once, and you failed me. I had you with me, and I trusted God in you; but now that you have turned from me, I will trust God alone without you, even though you now come back to the man you deserted." Dependence upon the Lord creates a glorious independence of man. Verily, it is true, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm"; but verily, verily, it is true, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Part of that blessedness will be found in the communion which such a man enjoys with God whenever he approaches him in prayer.

Still, following the same line, notice that David *pleads for God's presence because he is God's servant.* He says here, "Save thy servant." A servant has liberty to enquire as to his master's will, and he is justified in asking to see his Lord. If he is employed upon his master's business, he says, "I want orders. I wish to tell my master my difficulties, and to seek from him a supply for those necessities which his service will bring upon me." You feel that he has a good and sufficient plea when he urges this request. Even so, if you can honestly feel that you are spending your strength in the Lord's service, you, also, may lawfully expect that, when you draw near to him in prayer, your Master will speak to you as his servant, and he that has sent you will commune with you.

David urges yet another reason why just now he should

see God, namely, that *he is always in prayer:* "I cry unto thee daily." The Lord will hear your prayer, my dear hearer, to-night, if you never prayed before: I am quite sure of it. But I am still more sure that, if you have been long in the habit of prayer, it is not possible that the Father of mercies should cease to hear you. Oh, the sweet delights of constancy in prayer! The habit of prayer is charming, but the spirit of prayer is heavenly. Be always praying. Is that possible? Some have realized it, till the whole of the engagements of the day have been ablaze with prayer. God bring us each one into that condition! Then we need not barely hope that he will have intercourse with us, for we shall be already enjoying his presence and his fellowship. Blessed are we when prayer surrounds us like an atmosphere. Then we are living in the presence of God; we are continually conversing with him. May such be our lot! May we climb to the top of the mount of communion, and may we never come down from it!

David also tells the Lord that, when he could not attain to the nearness he desired, *yet he struggled after it, and strained after it.* Is not this the meaning of the expression, "Rejoice the soul of thy servant, for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul"? As much as if he said, "Lord, when I cannot climb the hill of fellowship, I labour to do so. If I cannot enter into thy presence, I groan until I do so." We ought either to be rejoicing in the Lord, or pining after him! Ask God to make you miserable, unless his conscious presence makes you happy. Unless his love is shed abroad in your heart, to be the beginning of heaven, may you mourn his absence as a very hell to your soul! Often I pray—

> "Oh, make my heart rejoice, or ache;
> Resolve each doubt for me:
> Lord, if it be not broken, break;
> And heal it if it be."

We want one of the two—either to commune with God, or else to sigh and cry till we do so. We must hunger

and thirst after righteousness if we are not filled. To be in a state of content without fellowship with God would be a terrible condition indeed.

Now, when a man's daily cries and inward strivings are after God, he may certainly expect that God in prayer will have intercourse with him. But again, I say, does it not seem extraordinary that you and I, insignificant persons, who can have no claim upon the great Maker of the universe, should yet be permitted to come to his courts—ay, even to come to himself through Christ Jesus, and speak with him as a man speaketh with his friend? Do not think that Abraham, when he stood before the Lord, and pleaded with him, as one man does with another, was singularly favoured above the rest of the elect family. It was a high favour, I cannot tell you how great; but such honour have all the saints. There are occasions with all his people when the Lord brings them very near, and speaks with them, and they with him, when his presence is to them as real as the all-pervading air, and they are as much rejoiced in it as in the presence of father, or wife, or child, or friend.

Still David, conscious of the great privilege which he sought, was not content without pleading the master argument of all: *he pleads the great goodness of the Lord.* Read it in verse five: "For thou, Lord, art good." As much as to say—If thou wert not good thou wouldst never listen to me. I am, as it were, a noxious insect which a man might far sooner crush than speak with; and yet thou art so good, my God, that instead of setting thy foot on me, thou dost lift me up and talk with me. Who thinks of an angel talking with an emmet? That would be nothing; here is Jehovah speaking with a creature which is crushed before the moth. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." He lets an unworthy creature tell out its heart to him, and he bows his ear, and listens as earnestly as if there were no other voice in heaven to command his thought. He gives his whole attention to the feeble cry of an unworthy one. Such an amazing

fact could not happen unless it were written, " For thou, Lord, art good."

Ah ! but besides that, there is sin in us. I can understand the great God forgetting our littleness, and bowing down to it ; but for the holy God not to be held off by our sinfulness, this is a greater wonder still. But then the verse says he is " ready to forgive." Ah, yes ! when some of us think of what we were, we must be drowned in amazement that ever we should be permitted to commune with God. Yonder is a man who could once swear at an awful rate, and now God listens to his voice in prayer. Another was a Sabbath-breaker, a neglecter of the Word of God, a despiser of every holy and pure thing, and yet he is now permitted to come into intimate friendship with the Most High. It is very marvellous, is it not ?

Remember, none ever washed Christ's feet except a woman that was a sinner. Our Lord selects those that have been the greatest sinners to come into the nearest communion with himself. It may be he has raised up some sister here, who was once a tempter of others, to become a mighty intercessor in prayer for the salvation of others. It may be that some brother here, who once was—ah ! but he is ashamed to remember what he was —has now become mighty in supplication ; and, like Elijah, can open or shut the windows of heaven. Oh, the strangeness of Almighty grace ! Let God's name be magnified for ever and ever.

Thus I have enlarged on the first thought that, in prayer, it is vital to us really to speak with God. Before I leave it, I want to pass a question round the place. Do you, my dear hearers, all pray so as to speak with God ? If not, what does it mean ? If you merely repeat good words, what is the use of it ? You might as well stand on a hill and talk to the moon, as kneel down and hurry through the Lord's Prayer, and then think that you have prayed. I tell you, you might better do the first than the second, for you would not insult God in that case ; whereas you do insult him in every one of those holy

words which you use without thought, heart, and faith. Think how you would like your own child every morning to come to you, and repeat a certain set of words without meaning anything thereby. You would say, "There, child, there, I have heard that often enough. Come to me no more with your empty noise." You would not care for vain repetitions. But when your boy or girl says, "Father, I need such a thing, please give it me," you hearken to the child's words. It may be that you have not enough of this world's goods to be very anxious that your children should come with large petitions; but if you were sufficiently rich, you would say, "That is right, dear child. Is there anything else you want? Tell me what it is. I will right gladly give you all things that are needful for you." You would wish your child's request to be an intelligent one, and then you would gladly attend to it. If your prayer does not come from your heart it will not go to God's heart; and if it does not bring you near to God, so that you are speaking to him, you have simply wasted your breath. You have done worse than nothing, for in all likelihood you have daubed your conscience over with the notion that you have prayed, and so you have even done yourself serious harm by a flattering deceit. Oh, that God would save you from being so foolish!

II. And now I come to the second point, and I pray God to give me strength to speak upon it, and give you grace to hear it. Not at any great length, but with much earnestness, I have to remind you that David, in his prayer, desired PERSONAL ANSWERS FROM GOD. When we pray, we expect God to hear us, even as David says, "In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me."

I must not speak for all Christians in this matter; but I may speak for myself and for many dear brethren in the faith, and I must boldly say that we expect the Lord to hear our prayers; nay, we are sure that he does so. We hear our fellow-Christians say, when we tell them of instances in which God has heard our prayers,

"How very extraordinary!" And we look at them, and say, "Extraordinary!" Has it become an extraordinary thing for God to be true to his own promise? I like better the remark of the good old lady, who, when her prayer was answered, was asked, "Does it not surprise you?" She said, "No, it does not surprise me; it is just like him." If any one of you had a promise from a friend that, upon your sending in a note, he would give you such and such a thing; if you sent the request, and he fulfilled his promise, would you say, "I am greatly surprised at his action"? No, no: you believe that your friend means what he says, and you look for him to keep his word. O child of God, deal with God on those terms. The wonder was, that he should make the promise at all; but when he has made the promise, it is not wonderful that he should keep it. He expects you to ask, and he waits to give.

A promise is like a cheque. If I have a cheque, what do I do with it? Suppose I carried it about in my pocket, and said, "I do not see the use of this bit of paper, I cannot buy anything with it," a person would say, "Have you been to the bank with it?" "No, I did not think of that." "But it is payable to your order. Have you written your name on the back of it?" "No, I have not done that." "And yet you are blaming the person who gave you the cheque? The whole blame lies with yourself. Put your name at the back of the cheque, go with it to the bank, and you will get what is promised to you." A prayer should be the presentation of God's promise endorsed by your personal faith. I hear of people praying for an hour together. I am very pleased that they can; but it is seldom that I can do so, and I see no need for it. It is like a person going into a bank with a cheque, and stopping an hour. The clerks would wonder. The common-sense way is to go to the counter and show your cheque, and take your money, and go about your business. There is a style of prayer which is of this fine practical character. You so believe in God that you present the promise, obtain

the blessing, and go about your Master's business. Sometimes a flood of words only means excusing unbelief. The prayers of the Bible are nearly all short ones: they are short and strong. The exceptions are found in places of peculiar difficulty, like that of Jacob, when he cried,

> "With thee all night I mean to stay,
> And wrestle till the break of day."

As a general rule, faith presents its prayer, gets its answer, and goes on its way rejoicing.

We expect our God to answer our prayer all the more surely when we are in trouble. David so expected: "In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me." Trouble is sent to make us pray. When we pray, the prayer becomes the solace of our trouble; and when the prayer is heard, it becomes the salvation out of our trouble. Many of you would be out of trouble quickly if you prayed. "Sir, I have been doing my best." And what is your best? A better thing than your best is to wait upon the Lord. Often and often trial has to rap our fingers to make us let go our harmful confidences, and turn to the Lord. With our vain-confidence we are like a madman with a razor: the more we grasp it, the more it cuts us. Drop the deadly self-trust; trust in God, and look to him, and your deliverance will speedily come to you. If you should have no answer at any other time, you will assuredly be heard in the time of trouble if you trust in the Lord.

Now, if we expect God to answer us, we do so on very good grounds. There are certain natural reasons. I was turning over in my mind the question, "Why do I pray? Why have I any reason to believe that God hears me?" And I thought to myself, "Well, on natural grounds I have a right to believe that God will hear prayer, or *otherwise why is prayer commanded?*" The Scripture is full of prayer. It is an institution of

the old covenant, as well as of the new, and yet it is a piece of folly if God does not hear it.

"Oh," says somebody, "but it does you good to pray, even though there may be no such a thing as God's hearing prayer." It might do an idiot good to pray when he knew there was no hearing of prayer on God's part; but not being an idiot myself, I could not perform such a stupid exercise. I would as soon sit on a five-barred gate, and whistle to the hills as offer prayer if I did not hope to be heard. If there is no God that hears prayer, I shall not pray, nor will any other rational being. Show prayer to be unheard of God, and you have shown it to be a folly. Show prayer to be a folly, and who will pursue it? Does God invite us to pray? Does he command us to pray? Are there many injunctions of this kind—"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint"; "Pray without ceasing"; and so on? Then prayer must be heard of God. How would it be with you if you said to a number of poor people, "Come round to my gate to-morrow, and I will relieve your distresses"? Would you not intend to relieve their distresses when you said so? I cannot imagine that you would be so diabolical as to keep on saying, "Come to my house. Whenever you are hungry, come to my table. Whenever you need clothes, come to my door, and ask"; all the while saying to yourself, "But I do not intend to give you anything. You may come, and ring the bell as long as you like; it will be fine exercise for you, but I shall take no notice of your appeals." It would be a most shocking and disgraceful mockery of misery. God will not serve us in that fashion. The very institution of prayer gives us the assurance that God intends to hear and to answer.

Observe, again, that *prayer has been universal among all the saints.* There have been saints of different moulds and temperaments, but they have all prayed. Some of them have been, like Heman and Asaph, masters of song, and they have prayed; others could not sing, but they have all prayed. To-day you may meet with all sorts

of Christians, holding many kinds of doctrines, but they all pray; and what is most curious, they all pray alike, too. You can scarcely detect a difference when they pray.

> "The saints in prayer appear as one,
> In word, and deed, and mind."

A man may preach doctrine contrary to the grace of God; but get him on his knees, and he prays to God for grace, as heartily as John Calvin himself. We are one at the mercy-seat. Whatever doctrinal views we may hold, when we plead with the living God, in the power of the Holy Ghost, we are poured into one mould. How is this? If, all the ages through, saints have prayed, have they all been fools? Have they all exercised themselves in a way that was utterly useless and absurd? Do not believe it!

Note again, that *the more godly and holy a man is, the more he prays*. You never heard yet that a man began to backslide, or that a sober man became a drunkard, through praying too much. Did you ever hear of a person becoming unkind to his wife, ungenerous to the poor, negligent of public worship, or guilty of grievous sin, through being too much in prayer? No; the case is the reverse. As the man loves God more, and becomes more like Christ, he takes greater delight in prayer. That cannot be an idle and useless exercise which the best of men have followed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If there be a possibility of error, we err in the best of company: for yonder comes the Lord Jesus himself from his lonely haunt, with the burrs of the heather from the mountain-side sticking to his garments. He has spent all night in agonizing prayer. He will not open his mouth to preach to the multitude till first of all he has received a new anointing from his Father's hand in secret fellowship with heaven. Our Master and his best disciples have abounded in prayer.

Well, dear friends, these are natural reasons; and there are a great many more, if you will think them out.

But, if you turn to Scriptural reasons, why was there a mercy-seat if there is nothing in prayer? Why does the throne of grace still remain as a permanent institution, of which Paul says, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace," unless there is a reality in it? Tell me, why is Christ the way to the mercy-seat? Why is he himself the great Intercessor and Mediator, if there is nothing in prayer? The Holy Ghost helpeth our infirmities in prayer; surely there must be something effectual where he lends his aid. What! is he, after all, helping us to do a thing which produces no result? helping us to present petitions which will never reach the ear of God? Tell that to the philosophers; we are not so credulous.

For, once more, we know that God hears prayer, because *we have met with multitudes of his people who can tell of answers to prayer.* What is more, we are ourselves among that number. Looking back on my diary, I find it studded with answers to prayer. Often when I have talked with friends of an evening, telling them a few cases in which God has heard my cries in time of need, they have said, "Have you written these down?" "Well, no, I cannot say that I have." "Oh," says one, "pray do not let such facts be lost." I have to reply that many cases of answered prayer are quite beyond the belief of average people. I know them to be true, but I do not expect others to believe my tale. When William Huntington wrote his "Bank of Faith," some people called it a "Bank of Nonsense." I could write twenty "Banks of Faith," and every word should be as sure as an honest man could write; but the only result would be, that people would say, "Oh, well, you know, that is the result of the good man's fanaticism." The moment that the moderns do not like to believe a thing they call it fanatical. If we were put into a witness-box to-morrow, our testimony would have weight with the court; but yet, the moment we talk about God's hearing prayer, oh, then we are romancing, and our witness is not to be received. But, brothers and sisters,

we bear a true witness, whether men receive it or not. I solemnly declare that no fact is better proved by my experience than this, that the Lord hears the prayers of his believing people. You, each one, will know for himself, or herself, whether there is a God that hears prayer. Does he answer your petitions? Brethren, you are sure that he does, and at the asking of the question you bow your heads and say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." My dear brother, William Olney, sits here among us: have we not prayed him twice back from the gates of the grave? He lives as an instance of answered prayer. There is not a stone or a beam about this great Tabernacle but has been an answer to our prayers. In days when, as a congregation, we were few and feeble, we ventured on the serious enterprise of building this great house, and we prayed it up stone by stone, to the praise and glory of God. If we who worship beneath this dome did not believe in prayer, the stones out of the wall would cry out against us.

But I hear a voice saying, "There are so many difficulties about prayer being heard." Are there? The farther I go in this life, the more difficulties I am informed of, though I should not have discovered them myself. I am assured that there are great difficulties about eating, breathing, and sleeping. As to the very air, I do not know what it is not full of: it teems with the seeds of disease, and the wonder is that we live at all. But we do live, do we not? and we shall eat our suppers to-night despite the difficulties in connection with food. As to the difficulties connected with prayer, they are altogether philosophical difficulties, and by no means practical ones. If you are philosophers, you may weary your heads about them; but if you are simple, practical people, you may pray, and receive the blessing.

"Ay, but the power of prayer with God supposes that God may change." Well, our doing anything supposes *that*, but it is a mere supposition. Your even walking home to-night might raise a difficulty as to the decrees of God; but it is a non-existent difficulty. After you

have entertained it as long as you like, you will find that you have entertained a shadow. Suppose that you leave off supposing, and just do as God tells you, and see whether it does not work. When you find that it does practically work, let other people enjoy the difficulties. I do not eat meat; but if I did, I should always feel quite satisfied to let my dogs have the bones: the meat would satisfy me. If there are any difficulties about prayer, the dogs may have them—I mean the philosophers; but as for us, simple Christian people, we are satisfied with the meat of the precious fact that prayer brings every blessing from above. We pray, and God hears us, and that is enough for us. Our God does not change his will, and yet he wills a change in answer to prayer.

I have done when I have made this further remark. I cannot expect any man to believe that he can commune with God, or that God will in very deed hear his prayer, and grant him his desire, unless he has been led personally to try it. But if, by the Spirit of God, he has been led to seek after God, and to draw near to God, I shall have no need of further arguments with him. That man has now entered upon a new life, in which he will be capable of understanding new things. Until he does enter upon that life, he is spiritually deaf, and blind; and what can he know about spiritual realities? Our Lord has said to us, "Ye must be born again." When we are born again, then the life within turns toward the life of God, and has fellowship with God, and God answers to it, and the desire of the godly one is granted. Oh! the honour of communion with God! Happy beings who enjoy it! How unspeakable the privilege of pouring out your hearts before God! Delight yourselves therein before you fall asleep this night. Oh, the holy quietude which it brings! You have not an ounce of care to carry, because all your burden is, in prayer and supplication, laid on him that careth for you! Oh, the love that dwells in the heart of the man who draws near to God in prayer! You cannot love God at a distance.

You must draw nearer, and nearer, or love will not rest. As when one comes into the sunshine, he feels the warmth, so when we come nearer to God we have more joy in him. Keep near to God; abound in prayer; let your supplications be instant and constant; and you will be sure that the Father himself hears your cries!

Oh, that some here who never prayed would begin at once! Trust in Jesus, the Intercessor, and let that trust show itself by pleading the merit of his blood in earnest prayer. Oh, that you would now begin that holy life of prayer which shall lead up to the eternal life of praise at the right hand of God. Amen.

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